

## Negative Campaigning: Polemics against Brahmins in a Buddhist *Sutta*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper takes a close look at the ways Brahmins are portrayed in one *sutta* of the Pāli canon that explains the ‘five ancient principles of Brahmins that today are seen in dogs, but not in Brahmins’. The paper analyses the method of comparing Brahmins with dogs and discusses the rhetorical purpose of this comparison by juxtaposing the respective statements with data from Brāhmaṇical law texts. In the course of this analysis three rhetorical techniques are identified (reductionism, exaggeration, and generalization), which Buddhists employed in their polemics against Brahmins.

**KEYWORDS:** Brahmanism, Buddhism, dogs, humour, Pāli canon, polemics, religious market, rhetoric.

The texts collected in the so-called Pāli canon can be approached from various angles and read with a variety of questions. In view of the representation of Brahmins and the Brāhmaṇical tradition they may, for instance, serve as sources for the inquiry into what their authors knew about the Brāhmaṇical tradition of their time. Comparing and contrasting this with the data found in Brāhmaṇical literature, scholars can understand better the social, economic and political circumstances in ancient India. Being doctrinal texts that were used in the education of Buddhist monks and nuns, they can also serve as sources for the examination of doctrinal differences (and similarities) between Buddhism and Brahmanism and of the interaction between the two traditions in the realm of ideas, concepts and ethics. Besides these two approaches, and probably many others, one can examine the ways in which the authors portrayed Brahmins—their behaviour and their doctrines—in order to make Buddhism look more appealing to the reader or listener. This approach, in which the respective texts are viewed as (re)sources that could be used by Buddhist monks and nuns for propaganda purposes, to attract followers, and

to reinforce their own religious identity, analyses the strategies and techniques applied in dealing with ‘the other’ (see Freiberger, forthcoming).

In this article I will pursue this last approach, focusing on one Buddhist *sutta* that contains polemics against Brahmins. I am following the general definition of the word ‘polemic’ suggested by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: ‘an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another’ (Merriam-Webster 2009). But focusing on the *sutta* as a propaganda device, I wish to specify this definition further by invoking a rhetorical method that is commonly used in contemporary politics and referred to as ‘negative campaigning’. When political scientists distinguish between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ campaigning, the former term refers to ‘making exaggerated claims about the benefits of [one’s] own platform’, the latter to ‘exaggerating the undesirable characteristics of [one’s] rival’ (Davis and Ferrantino 1996: 1). It is important to note that the words ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ do not imply a value judgment but are used as strictly directional. ‘Negative campaigning is talking about the opponent—criticizing his or her programs, accomplishments, qualifications, and so on. Positive campaigning is just the opposite: talking about one’s own programs, accomplishments, qualifications, and so on’ (Lau and Pomper 2004: 4). The latter can be exercised just as ‘unfairly’ as the former.

In a related article, economists Michael Davis and Michael Ferrantino analyse the costs and benefits of prevarications—or plain lies—in political campaigns from an economic perspective. Compared with the general marketplace (for instance, the car dealer who exaggerates the positive aspects of his own brand and speaks poorly about others), actors in the political market are even more likely to tell an untruth, because ‘the lack of transferable property rights to political office makes it less costly for the politician to lie’ (Davis and Ferrantino 1996: 12). Secondly, they argue that ‘if positive claims can be verified more easily than negative claims, there may be a natural bias in politics towards negative campaigning’ (p. 12). Generally speaking, the first conclusion might also apply to religious markets, but perhaps in a slightly different sense. While in religious traditions, unlike in political elections, the transfer of property rights is not uncommon, the claims of religious actors are even harder to verify than those of politicians, which makes telling an untruth even less costly for them. For example, one could fabricate, at no cost, the positive claim that divine beings have confirmed one’s own legitimacy, or the negative claim that a competitor is deluded as a result of his actions in a former existence. Because of these problems of verifiability, the second conclusion—that there is a natural bias towards negative campaigning—might not apply to religious markets.

These general remarks are merely meant to focus the lens for the following analysis of an account of negative campaigning in early Buddhism. Working with early Pāli texts, it is difficult to identify prevarications, because the exact knowledge the authors had of their competitors is hard to determine. We cannot know exactly at what point the authors consciously tell an untruth,

and in which cases they argue merely on the basis of their own perception. But we can analyse, on a less explicit level, the polemical techniques that they use, from insulting and asymmetric comparisons to exaggerated portrayals of their competitors' beliefs and practices.

#### A PARAPHRASE OF THE *SUTTA*

The *sutta* that I want to focus on in this article is the first *sutta* in the twentieth section of the 'Book of the Fives' in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* (*sutta* no. 191, AN III.221–22). It is a short text which explains the 'five ancient principles of Brahmins (*brāhmaṇadhammā*) that today are seen in dogs, but not in Brahmins'.<sup>1</sup> Here is a paraphrase: First, in the past Brahmins held the principle to go to Brahmin women only, not to non-Brahmin ones; today they go to both. Dogs, however, even now only go to female dogs, not to females of other species. Second, Brahmins of old used to approach a Brahmin woman only in the proper season, not at other times. Today's Brahmins do it anytime, while dogs approach she-dogs only during the proper season. Third, in old times Brahmins did not buy or sell Brahmin women; they engaged in getting together for the sake of companionship by mutual consent only. Today they do any of these things, while dogs behave like the Brahmins of old. Fourth, while in the past Brahmins did not engage in accumulating wealth, grain, silver and gold, they do it now; dogs do not. And the fifth principle Brahmins held in times of old was that they sought for food for the evening meal in the evening and for the morning meal in the morning. Today Brahmins eat their fill, as much as possible, and then go ahead and eat the remainder. Again, today's dogs act like the Brahmins of old.

I wish to examine the rhetorical techniques used in this *sutta* from three different angles. First I will briefly discuss the general choice of comparing Brahmins to dogs. Then I look at the method of comparison applied here and the rhetorical coherence of each of the five comparisons. Finally I will examine the contents of the alleged ancient Brāhmaṇical 'principles' as juxtaposed with contemporaneous Brāhmaṇical practice. For this I compare the statements of the *sutta* with the views expressed in early Brāhmaṇical legal texts. I conclude by summarizing the polemical rhetoric that is applied in this *sutta* in a more systematic way.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Pañc' ime bhikkhave porāṇā brāhmaṇadhammā etarahi sunakhesu sandissanti no brāhmaṇesu.* AN III 221,12–13. Also the *Brāhmaṇadhammikāsutta* of the *Suttanipāta* (*Sn* 50–55) mentions the ancient *brāhmaṇadhamma*, but in the singular, which Norman translates as 'the brahmanical lore of the Brahmins of old' (Norman 1996 [1984]: 49). The first four points of our *sutta* appear there as well, along with a number of other features ascribed to ancient Brahmins. It is explained how Brahmins lost those features over time, but they are not compared with dogs.
2. I use the term 'rhetoric' according to the first and most general meaning listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2009): 'The art of using language so as to persuade or influence others',

## THE EQUALIZATION OF BRAHMINS AND DOGS

The *sutta* displays a variety of disparaging statements that can be analysed as polemics of various sorts and degrees. Obviously, the bluntest and most offensive measure is to compare Brahmins with dogs in the first place, topped only by the statement that dogs are superior in every respect. From a Brāhmaṇical perspective, the dog is not exactly the noblest of creatures.<sup>3</sup> In the Upaniṣads dogs are described as animals that eat remainders just like birds (*BĀU* 3.9.25), or as improper food for humans, listed among worms, insects and flies (*BĀU* 6.1.14; *ChU* 5.2.1). According to the authors, only a person who has fully realized the knowledge of the Upaniṣad has overcome this notion of impropriety (which, therefore, applies to everyone else). The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* asserts that while people with good behaviour will be reborn as Brahmins, Kṣatriyas or Vaiśyas, those ‘of foul (*kapūya*) behaviour can expect to enter a foul womb, like that of a dog, a pig, or an outcaste woman’ (*ChU* 5.10.7, trans. Olivelle 1998: 237). The later *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* (Olivelle 2005) shows that these rather unflattering conceptualizations of the dog remained common in the Brāhmaṇical tradition. A person is born a dog as a result of bad deeds (*MDhŚ* 2.201; 12.55, 62); dogs are eaters of remainders and—as a form of punishment—of unfaithful wives (7.21; 8.371); encountering a dog at the wrong moment is inauspicious (4.126); dogs are the property of outcastes (10.51) and impure (4.208, but cf. 5.130–31; 11.160, 200); eating a dog is acceptable only when one is facing death (10.106, 108).<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not all those conceptual features were developed at the time when the Buddhist authors composed our *sutta* is unknown, but on the basis of those accounts it seems safe to say that, in general, Brahmins viewed the dog as a low and impure creature. It is also more than likely that the authors of the *sutta* were familiar with (and partly shared?) this Brāhmaṇical notion of dogs. In other Buddhist *suttas* dogs have roles similar to those in the Brāhmaṇical texts. For instance, we encounter ascetics who would not accept food when a dog is standing by (*DN* I.166,8–9), which may refer to the dog’s impurity and/or inauspiciousness;<sup>5</sup> elsewhere a form of punishment is mentioned in which an offender is thrown to dogs as their food (*AN* I 48,9).

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without negative connotations such as in ‘mere rhetoric’ or the like. I am not interested in making value judgments, but in the strategies and techniques that the authors use in talking about Brahmins.

3. For a detailed survey on the images, roles and functions of dogs in ancient India, see Bollée 2006. A less philological, more narrative, account is Debroy 2008; I thank Professor Bollée for this reference.
4. The fact that the Brāhmaṇical sources use the words *śvan*, *śvāna* and *śun* for ‘dog’ while the Pāli has (the related word) *sunakha* (Sanskrit *śunaka*) is, I believe, of little importance here. Other passages in the Pāli canon also use other Pāli equivalents, such as *san* or *suna* (see *PED*, s.v.).
5. Or it may refer, according to Willem Bollée (personal communication), to Jain ascetics who are not supposed to eat before everybody else—including a dog—has been fed; they are also afraid of being injured. The short passage (*na yattha sā upaṭṭhito hoti*) gives no further clues.

It seems, therefore, reasonable to assume that the authors of this *sutta* knew exactly what they were doing when they compared Brahmins with dogs. Not only did they, in their comparisons, equate people who thought of themselves as the highest and purest class in society with creatures that the Brahmins themselves located at the lower end of the purity scale. Even more, they claimed that dogs were superior, which automatically places Brahmins even below dogs. This form of polemic can be called an insulting equalization.

#### TECHNIQUES OF COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

Assuming, for the moment, that contemporary Brahmins did indeed behave as the *sutta* claims they did, we can analyse the applied form of comparison as a rhetorical and argumentative device. Apart from the above-discussed, general choice of taking Brahmins and dogs as the two subjects for comparison, it is important to note that also within those categories the authors compare selectively. They select only positive features of dogs, not negative ones, and vice versa. In all fairness to the authors, they explicitly limit their exposition to the ‘five ancient principles of Brahmins that today are seen in dogs, but not in Brahmins’. But this limitation, by itself, generates an asymmetric comparison which highlights positive aspects of dogs and negative ones of Brahmins. (One would also be able to state, as a counter-example, that hungry dogs lacerate and eat human beings—which is a form of punishment attested both by Buddhist and Brahmin sources—while hungry Brahmins do not.) With this technique—the selective and asymmetric comparison—the authors create the implication that dogs are altogether superior to Brahmins.

A closer look shows, furthermore, that only two of the five comparisons are coherent and logically sound. As most readers/listeners would probably agree with the empirical observation that dogs mate only with dogs (and not with other species), comparing this behaviour with inter-class relationships of Brahmins is an astute first move. After all, Brahmins themselves tend to construct social classes almost like biological species. Also the second point—that dogs approach she-dogs only in the proper season, i.e., when they are in heat—is an empirical observation about dogs that can certainly be compared with Brahmins (not) acting upon a concept of a ‘proper season’ for intercourse. The third comparison, however, is already problematic. It might be debatable whether it is possible that the authors made the observation that dogs have intercourse only by mutual consent. But saying that dogs do not buy or sell she-dogs makes little argumentative sense. Buying and selling are human activities, and no animal could possibly engage in them; they are not ‘seen in dogs’ because dogs are animals. Equally incoherent is the fourth comparison which states that dogs were superior to Brahmins because they did not accumulate wealth. The latter applies not only to all other animals as well but also to most members of society, including lower classes, ascetics and, in

fact, every person who is not rich. Comparing wealthy Brahmins with dogs has little argumentative power, because not accumulating wealth is hardly dog-specific. The fifth point, finally, is misleading at best. One might want to agree with the statement that dogs ‘seek food for the evening meal in the evening and for the morning meal in the morning’, but this does not mean that they abstain from seeking food in-between, which would have been the point of the argument. Again, the feature here associated with dogs is so generic that the comparison appears rhetorically weak.

The five comparisons are, thus, of mixed rhetorical quality. While the first two can be regarded as original and witty, the other three are incoherent, generic and unconvincing. It may well be that the authors felt the need to come up with more than just two comparisons and thus added three to the list. But placing the more convincing ones at the beginning of the list is clever, since listeners or readers tend to become less attentive to the coherence of additional comparisons when the first ones were cogent and entertaining. Thus, the weaknesses of the last three comparisons may have been less noticeable when the *sutta* was read or heard as a whole and in sequence.

Another factor that may be considered here is humour. Trying to detect humour in a culture so remote in time and place is always tricky, but recent studies have convincingly shown that humour most certainly had its place in the rhetorical repertoire of Indian Buddhism (Gombrich 2006: 65–95; Schopen 2007; Clarke 2009; see also Alf Hiltebeitel’s article in the present issue). Ridiculing Brahmins by comparing them with dogs may have been funny, and one may even speculate about whether the last three comparisons were made farcical on purpose—to generate laughter—which would perfectly compensate their weakness as arguments.

#### THE REPRESENTATION OF BRĀHMAṄICAL PRECEPTS AND PRACTICES

In the *sutta* Brahmins are compared not only with dogs, but also with Brahmins of the past. The implicit comment that Brahmins of old behaved, at least, not worse than dogs do today (but rather just like them), still falls under ‘insulting equalization’. But the claim that Brahmins once used to behave better and now pursue a degenerate lifestyle—a claim often made in various forms in the canonical Pāli texts—has polemic potential of its own. It is unlikely that the authors really meant to factually compare an earlier historical situation with the present. In general, comparing and contrasting behaviour (of Brahmins in the past) with other behaviour (that of today’s Brahmins) could be considered a legitimate form of argument that *may* illustrate a change in Brahmin practice. But here the invocation of the past is utilized to contrast precepts, on the one hand, and actual social practice, on the other. The authors call those precepts *brāhmaṇadhammā*, ‘Brahmins’ principles’, and it is worthwhile to discuss them individually.

In order to get a sense of the views that Brahmins themselves may have had about these issues, I will draw on early Brāhmaṇical law codes: the Dharmasūtras and Manu's *Dharmaśāstra*. Such a comparative approach has various pitfalls. First, we cannot date our *sutta* with any degree of certainty. It may have been composed before or during the period in which the Dharmasūtras were created (circa third–second century BCE; see Olivelle 2000: 4–10), or it may be younger. Second, the Brāhmaṇical legal tradition is not static. The *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*, which is considerably younger than the Dharmasūtras (second–third century CE; see Olivelle 2005: 18–25), can offer us some older opinions that were included by Manu, but also propagates newer viewpoints that can sometimes be regarded as responses to criticism from outside or from within the Brāhmaṇical tradition. Third, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the rules and regulations of this legal tradition were known to Buddhists and, in particular, to the authors of this *sutta*. But, as we will see, even if they did not know the exact same versions of the *dharma* texts that we have today, they seem to have been well-informed about a number of details. Comparing and contrasting, with all due caution, the Buddhist statements with the Brāhmaṇical legal texts may, therefore, give us an idea of how Buddhists used that knowledge to their advantage. Finally, it is worth noting that according to the *sutta* the five principles (*brāhmaṇadhammā*) had not only been ancient precepts but had also been practised by Brahmins in a mythical past. In some cases we can discuss both the alleged precept and the alleged ancient practice.

The first principle—that Brahmin men go to Brahmin women only,<sup>6</sup> just like dogs remain within their own species—apparently refers to the idea of the purity of the classes (*varṇas*) that is promoted by Brāhmaṇical ideology. A man should, according to the early law codes, be married to a woman who belongs to the same class (*savarṇa*) (*ĀpDhS* 2.13.1) or who is 'like' the husband, or 'suitable' (*sadṛśa*) (*GauDhS* 4.1). The Dharmasūtras do not, however, elaborate much on this ideal. Rather, they explain in detail how the diversity in society is caused by the intermingling of the classes (*GauDhS* 4.16–28; *BauDhS* 1.16.6–17.15). The *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* recommends a woman of equal class (*savarṇa*) at the first marriage but allows women of other classes for further marriages (*MDhŚ* 3.12–13). The fierce way in which Manu speaks out against marrying a Śūdra woman (*MDhŚ* 3.14–19) seems to suggest that this was, in fact, also an all too common practice. Those passages already demonstrate that, while generally advocating the idea of pure *varṇas*, the Brāhmaṇical lawmakers acknowledge that social practice by no means follows the ideal of class-separation. In fact, the lawmakers themselves allow for intermingling, so long as it follows certain rules. Apart from the fact that it is rather unlikely that Brahmin men 'of the past', as our *sutta* claims, had ever intermarried exclusively with Brahmin women, the Brāhmaṇical law texts do not, even as

6. *Pubbe sudaṃ bhikkhave brāhmaṇā brāhmaṇiṃ yeva gacchanti no abrahmaṇiṃ. AN III 221,14–15.*



an ideal, address and stress this exclusivity much. If we, moreover, assume that the lawmakers' vision of society was already more idealistic than how people acted in social reality, it is safe to conclude that the Buddhist authors of our *sutta* well exaggerated the alleged Brāhmaṇical 'principle' of class-exclusivity regarding women.

The second *brāhmaṇadhamma* declares that in the past Brahmins approached a woman only when she was 'in season'.<sup>7</sup> This is indeed a rule in Brāhmaṇical law, where the same term (Sanskrit *rtu*, Pāli *utu*) is used to indicate the period when a woman was believed to be fertile (see Olivelle 2000: 505, note to 1.17). The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, for instance, says, 'When his wife is in season, he must have sexual intercourse with her as required by his vow' (*ĀpDhS* 2.1.17, trans. Olivelle 2000: 75). The *Gautama Dharmasūtra* and the *Mānava Dharmasāstra* have the same provision (*GauDhS* 5.1, *MDhŚ* 3.45). However, it is interesting to note how this discussion continues. *Āpastamba* says, 'And if his wife wants it, he may have sex with her between the seasons as well, in accordance with the Brāhmaṇa passage' (*ĀpDhS* 2.1.18–19, trans. Olivelle 2000: 75–77).<sup>8</sup> The other two have similar follow-up regulations. *Gautama* continues, 'Or at any time, except on days when it is forbidden' (*GauDhS* 5.2, trans. Olivelle 2000: 131), and *Manu* declares, 'Devoted solely to her, he may go to her also when he wants sexual pleasure, except on the days of the moon's change' (*MDhŚ* 3.45, trans. Olivelle 2005: 110). This is not the place to further discuss the implications of these provisions (e.g. the question of which partner can be the instigator of extra-seasonal sex). It should suffice to note that the early law codes agree on the concept that the partners are obliged to have sexual intercourse in the proper season, but that other times are permitted too. Thus Brahmins who have intercourse outside that season would, even according to these law codes, not act against their own principle (*brāhmaṇadhamma*). Furthermore, as this is an intimate matter, there is no way to prove or disprove—neither for us today nor for the Buddhist authors of the *sutta*—that general Brahmin behaviour has changed in this respect and that Brahmins of old had followed that general rule. The Buddhist authors frame a Brāhmaṇical ideal in a reductive way and contrast it with what they purport to be current practice.

It is not entirely clear to what the authors refer when they, thirdly, state that Brahmins of their time bought and sold Brahmin women, whereas in the past they had gotten together with a woman by mutual consent.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that they allude to the practice of paying a bride-price (*śulka*), which is often mentioned in Brāhmaṇical texts. Stephanie Jamison addresses the issue of the 'maiden as commodity' in her book *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife*

7. *Pubbe sudaṃ bhikkhave brāhmaṇā brāhmaṇiṃ utuniṃ yeva gacchanti no anutuniṃ. AN III 221,20–21.*

8. The Brāhmaṇa passage mentioned here may be *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 2.5.1.5; see Olivelle 2000: 505, note to 1.18–19.

9. *Pubbe sudaṃ bhikkhave brāhmaṇā brāhmaṇiṃ neva kiṇanti no vikkiṇanti sampiyen' eva saṃvāsaṃ saṃsaggaṭṭhāya sampavattenti. AN III 222,6–8.*



and concludes by saying that, ‘in both legal and narrative texts the crucial issue in marriage is the *transfer* of the bride from the paternal to the conjugal domain, and the costs and benefits entailed for both parties in this transaction’ (Jamison 1996: 210). She shows that giving away a girl for a bride-price is a custom that is attested already in Vedic literature and also in later texts such as the *Mahābhārata*. The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* says, ‘It is said in the Veda that at the time of marriage the groom should voluntarily give a gift to the bride’s father in order to fulfil the Law... The term “sale” (*kṛaya*) used in connection with this rite is only a figure of speech, for their union is brought about through the Law’ (*ĀpDhS* 2.13.11, trans. Olivelle 2000: 93–95). Among the accepted forms of marriage the ‘seer’s marriage’ (*ārṣa*) is one in which the bridegroom gives a bull and a cow to the father of the bride (*GauDhS* 4.8; *BauDhS* 1.20.4; *VaDhS* 1.32, *MDhŚ* 3.29; see also Jamison 1996: 215–18).<sup>10</sup> The *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, the youngest of the four *Dharmasūtras*, defines the ‘human marriage’ (*mānuṣa*) as follows: ‘when a man negotiates a price and purchases a girl for money’, referring back to the *Āpastamba* passage quoted above (*VaDhS* 1.35, trans. Olivelle 2000: 355). Judging from those accounts, it seems unlikely that there had ever been a time ‘in the past’ when this specific situation of giving or accepting a bride-price was considered, on principle, immoral by the Brāhmaṇical tradition.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the alleged ancient Brāhmaṇical principle of ‘getting together by mutual consent’ might refer to what the legal texts call a *Gāndharva* marriage. This type of marriage, however, which is based on mutual love (or lust), had never been a particular favourite of Brāhmaṇical lawgivers; it is not listed as a permitted marriage option for Brahmins and, depending on the respective law text, is even considered as barely legal for Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas or Śūdras.<sup>12</sup> So it would have hardly represented the original, ancient Brāhmaṇical principle, as the Buddhist authors claim. It is more likely that the Buddhists attributed their own moral view to Brahmins of the past who had, allegedly, behaved much better than those of the present. Finally, if it is the bride-price that the authors of our *sutta* refer

10. It may be noted that elsewhere (*MDhŚ* 3.51–54) Manu clearly expresses his opinion that giving a bull and a cow did not constitute a bride-price (*śulka*). Here he also condemns the bride-price as such. Nevertheless, many other passages in the *MDhŚ* clearly show that paying and accepting *śulka* was a common practice. See the discussions in Jamison 1996: 213–15; and Olivelle 2005: 258–59 (note to 3.53).

11. Some Brāhmaṇical sources may be ambiguous in the interpretation of the process of gift-giving (see Jamison 1996: 210–18), but only Manu—and only in certain passages—condemns the practice openly. His point of view, however, seems to be an innovation rather than an old principle. Outspoken criticism of the bride-price seems to become increasingly popular over time, with Manu being a relatively late voice, possibly younger than our *sutta*. It is not impossible that this criticism constitutes a Brāhmaṇical reaction to, or co-option of, a common criticism of the time that was expressed by Buddhists (and others?), as attested by our *sutta*.

12. See, for a useful survey of the types of marriage in various sources and for further references, Jamison 1996: 296 n. 10.

to, they do not specify this, which could be a rhetorical ploy in itself. While a bride-price was presumably paid only once in one woman's lifetime, the way the *sutta* is phrased suggests that Brahmins are constantly engaged in human trafficking ('buying and selling women'). If the assumptions are correct and the authors do indeed want to allude to the customary practice of giving and accepting a bride-price, they refuse to confine themselves to stating that this was wrong on moral grounds. Rather, they generalize and exaggerate the practice, and they claim—incorrectly, it seems—that Brahmins acted against their own principles.

The fourth *brāhmaṇadhamma* refers to the Brahmins' wealth. The *sutta* declares that, unlike contemporary Brahmins, those of old had not accumulated wealth, grain, silver and gold,<sup>13</sup> clearly implying that Brahmins have become greedy. The early Brāhmaṇical law texts, however, declare that it is perfectly legitimate for a Brahmin householder to own and acquire wealth.<sup>14</sup> This is attested, for example, by inheritance rules that regulate how the wealth of a deceased householder should be divided (see, e.g., *ĀpDhS* 2.13.12–14.20) and by the maxim that there must be no separation of property between husband and wife, 'because from the time of their marriage they are linked together in performing religious rites, as also in receiving the rewards of their meritorious deeds and in acquiring wealth' (*ĀpDhS* 2.14.16–19, trans. Olivelle 2000: 95). And it is clearly expressed in the statement that one 'should be a man who applies himself to acquiring wealth in righteous ways, distributes it to worthy people', and thus 'wins both worlds' (*ĀpDhS* 2.20.18–23, trans. Olivelle 2000: 103; see also 2.16.24–25). On the other hand, 'if someone frustrates (*vadheṣu*) the acquisition of a wife, food, or wealth, for each such offense he should observe the life of chastity for one year' (*GauDhS* 22.28, trans. Olivelle 2000: 175). Manu declares that Brahmins who 'have acquired wealth through a reprehensible activity (*garhitena*)' purify themselves 'by giving away that wealth and by engaging in soft recitation and ascetic toil' (*MDhŚ* 11.194, trans. Olivelle 2005: 225), and elsewhere he explains the seven means of acquiring wealth that are in accordance with the law: inheritance, finding, purchase, conquest, investment, work, and acceptance of gifts from good people (*MDhŚ* 10.115). These statements show, either implicitly or explicitly, that Brāhmaṇical lawgivers did not consider the practice of accumulating wealth as problematic in any fundamental way. On the contrary, they describe it as a regular, characteristic feature of a householder's life. In the Buddhist texts too the wealthy Brahmin is, as Ryūtarō Tsuchida has discussed, a person whom Buddhists encounter frequently (Tsuchida 1991). But the Buddhists were also

13. *Pubbe sudaṃ bhikkhave brāhmaṇā na sannidhiṃ karonti dhanassa pi dhaññassa pi rajatassa pi jātarūpassa pi.* *AN* III 222,15–17.

14. The Dharmasūtras use various words for 'wealth', among them *dravya*, *artha*, *dhana* and *dhanya*. Already in the major Upaniṣads Brahmins are regularly depicted as wealthy; see Black 2007: 88–92.

familiar with another, ascetic type of Brahmin, whom the Buddhist monks may have felt more closely related to.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that the authors of our *sutta* used this inner-Brāhmaṇical diversity for their own ends. By declaring that according to an ancient *brāhmaṇadhamma* Brahmins were not supposed to accumulate wealth, they might have highlighted the ascetic ideal of certain contemporary Brahmin ascetics and applied this standard to a different group, the wealthy Brahmins. As the householder Brahmins presumably would not see any reason why they should follow such an ideal, the seeming accusation of hypocrisy by Buddhists is non-factual, that is, polemical.

According to the fifth and last principle in the *sutta*, Brahmins in ancient times had sought for food for the evening meal in the evening and for the morning meal in the morning,<sup>16</sup> while contemporary Brahmins ate anytime, and as much as possible. Gluttony goes along well with greed for wealth, the accusation of the previous statement. Regarding the morning and evening meals we find an interesting parallel in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*. It states that under normal circumstances a householder or a student must not practise austerity by fasting, because ‘by his failure to perform the offering to the vital breaths, he becomes equal to a student who has broken his vow of chastity’ (*BauDhS* 2.13.9, trans. Olivelle 2000: 287). But this does not apply, says Baudhāyana, to times in which he undergoes a penance (*prāyaścitta*). Then he quotes this verse: ‘When a man never eats between his morning and evening meal, he observes a continuous fast (*sadopavāsa*).’<sup>17</sup> The terms used in this verse are identical with those in the Buddhist *sutta* (‘morning meal’: *prātārāsa*,

15. Tsuchida (1991: 90–91) summarizes the results of his study by saying: ‘[A]t the time of the rise of Buddhism, the class of śrotriya-Brahmins had split into two distinct groups, each having quite a different lifestyle. The greater part of the śrotriya-Brahmins led the lives of wealthy householders called in Pāli canonical texts *brāhmaṇagahapatikā* or *brāhmaṇamahāsālā*, and they exerted even an economic and political influence on society. Although they were not totally alienated from the practice of śrauta-ritualism, the central component of their religious activities had shifted to simpler kinds of Vedic rituals and the study and transmission, for their own sake, of Vedic texts. On the other hand, some of the śrotriya-Brahmins who adhered to the most orthodox tradition of śrauta-ritualism gave up their involvement in secular affairs but continued, as hermit-ritualists, not only to practice austerities and meditation, but also to perform sacrifices and pursue Vedic study. In canonical texts they are represented as *jaṭila*-ascetics living in *assama*-s. Generally speaking, the Buddha seems to have been on friendly terms with these Brahmin ascetics’. Whether or not one fully agrees with this precise description of the two types of Brahmins, it is hard to dispute the assumption that both certain householders and certain ascetics would have identified themselves as Brahmins. Note also that Brāhmaṇical texts depict the seers of old as ascetics. The lifestyle of those mythical seers was certainly not meant to be a model for contemporary Brahmin householders, but the *sutta* may allude to this idea too and use it against Brahmins.

16. *Pubbe sudaṃ bhikkhave brāhmaṇā sāyaṃ sāyamāsāya pāto pātārāsāya bhikkhaṃ pariyesanti. AN III 222,23–24.*

17. *Antarā prātārāsaṃ ca sāyamāsaṃ tathaiva ca | sadopavāsī bhavati yo na bhūikte kadācana || BauDhS 2.13.11, trans. Olivelle 2000: 287.*

Pāli *pātarāsa*; ‘evening meal’: *sāyamāsa*, Pāli *sāyamāsa*). For Baudhāyana’s source, abstaining from eating between morning and evening meal—presumably for a certain number of days—constitutes a ‘continuous’ (*sadā*) fast. This statement could be viewed as an attempt to appropriate, or ‘domesticate’, an ascetic fasting practice by labelling a regularly prescribed eating practice of the Brahmin householder as ‘fasting’ (Olivelle 2006: 37–39). But if the location of this verse is not a transmission error, at least one redactor of the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* wants to link this eating prescription to a (temporary) penance (*prāyaścitta*), implying that Brahmins are normally allowed to eat at any time of the day. Later Manu prescribes eating twice a day as the regular practice of twice-born men, not as a particular fast.<sup>18</sup> His view corresponds to the allegedly ancient *brāhmaṇadhamma* of the *sutta*, but his law code is younger than Baudhāyana’s.<sup>19</sup> In any case, if there were various opinions about this issue in the Brahmin community, the Buddhists may have used this disagreement to their advantage. Baudhāyana’s statement and its link to penance and fasting suggests that eating only twice a day was viewed by some as an austerity of sorts. As in the previous case, it is possible that, in the Buddhist perception, the Brāhmaṇical ascetics of the time lived according to this rule, whereas the Brahmin householders did not. That the Buddhist authors had ascetics in mind is also indicated by their use of the term *bhikkhā* for ‘food’, which refers to begged food, or almsfood. Again, the Buddhists highlighted one ideal of the Brāhmaṇical tradition and judged all Brahmins by that standard.

## CONCLUSION

Taking this *sutta* as a Buddhist advertising tool for a religious market on which Brahmins are competitors, it can be viewed as an account of negative campaigning. Again, the word ‘negative’ does not imply a value judgment but denotes the direction of the argument: the *sutta* does not explicate Buddhist teachings but focuses solely on Brāhmaṇical ideals and practices and presents them in a devaluating way.

The analysis of the *sutta* has shown that the authors use a variety of rhetorical techniques, of which most are related to the act of comparison. First, the equalization of Brahmins and dogs as such is insulting; it comes as close to an *ad hominem* attack as it gets in such a general polemic. By selecting certain features as *tertia comparationis* the authors highlight only positive aspects of dogs and only negative ones of Brahmins. Placing the two rhe-

18. See *MDhŚ* 6.19 and the note in Olivelle 2005: 289. An additional verse after 2.52 (only in some manuscripts) says it explicitly: ‘For twice-born persons, scriptures prescribe eating in the morning and in the evening; one should not eat in between. This practice is equal to a fire sacrifice’ (ed. Olivelle 2005: 412; trans. Olivelle 2005: 247).

19. Again, the *MDhŚ* might already include responses to points of criticism that the older *Dharmasūtras* do not address.

torically strong comparisons at the beginning of the list sets the tone and obscures the weaknesses of the other three. In short, the purpose-driven selection of the material—this purpose being Brahmin-bashing—yields a manipulative, asymmetric comparison, combined with a strategic arrangement of the compared items.

Second, the authors compare the behaviour of contemporary Brahmins with old Brāhmaṇical principles and, simultaneously, with the behaviour of ancient Brahmins who, allegedly, followed those principles. The obvious implication is that the Brahmins failed to remain true to the values of their ancestors and thus betrayed their own tradition. Just like the authors turn the Brāhmaṇical claim of purity on its head by placing Brahmins beneath dogs, here they attack another important value that Brahmins—in their own texts as well as in Buddhist narratives—frequently quote as a point of reference: the old and long-standing Brāhmaṇical tradition. The authors do not only claim that the Brahmins failed to act upon their own principles (which seems to be the core argument); they also add the polemical twist that this failure was the result of a process of degeneration. What is left of the cherished Brāhmaṇical tradition of the past is, in this rhetoric, no more than a degenerate present.

A comparative glance at some early Brāhmaṇical law codes suggests that in this *sutta* the alleged Brāhmaṇical principles are, at least to a certain degree, misrepresented. Due to the difficulties in dating and linking the sources, nothing definitive can be said about the authors' knowledge (or perception) of those principles. Therefore we cannot prove that the authors deliberately misrepresented them, or to which degree. But given that the *sutta* displays some detailed knowledge about Brāhmaṇical customs and terminology, some general rhetorical methods can be tentatively determined. The authors seem to use three major, interrelated techniques: reductionism, exaggeration and generalization. They tend to be *reductive* by highlighting certain Brāhmaṇical principles and presenting them in the most extreme and pointed way, not mentioning modifications or explanations, and generally ignoring the diversity within the Brāhmaṇical tradition.<sup>20</sup> With this technique of reductionism, the authors first *exaggerate* the selected principle and then compare this exaggerated precept to the actual practice of Brahmins. Even a Brahmin who would follow all the rules of the early law codes could not pass this test. Along those lines, the authors make *generalizations* by suggesting that *all* Brahmins *always* acted against certain rules—and, reversely, that all Brahmins are supposed to follow them, whether they are householders or ascetics. Furthermore, they do not take into account that some rules are meant for specific situations. In this rhetoric, the custom of paying a bride-price can turn into 'buying and selling Brahmin women'.

20. Again, it is hard to say to what degree this is intentional. However, the fact that the Buddhists knew about the distinction between Brahmin householders and Brahmin ascetics might account, at least, for some awareness of diversity within Brahmanism.

Identifying those rhetorical techniques and their application in a polemical text indicates the impressive range of ways in which Buddhists dealt with perceived non-Buddhists, way beyond the rather vague notions of ‘tolerance’ or ‘skill-in-means’. If the rhetoric of this *sutta* is ‘negative campaigning’, it would be very interesting to know whether this campaign was successful. Of course, even trying to identify the target audience of the *sutta* is difficult and speculative. We can assume that the authors did not expect that their polemic would be very helpful in attracting Brahmins and making them converts or, at least, in making them support the *saṅgha*, as it seems to be the intention of some rather ‘Brahmin-friendly’ *suttas* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.<sup>21</sup> Here the Brahmins are rather treated as competitors (like opponents in an election campaign), while the target audience may have been (non-Brāhmaṇical?) householders who could, with their material resources, support either Brahmins or Buddhists (like voters who support either one or the other candidate). Of course, such a yes-or-no decision may not have coincided with actual social practice, but in the campaigning rhetoric of the *sutta* the line is clearly drawn. It suggests that there was nothing honourable left in contemporary Brahmins that would be worthy of support (like in a political opponent who is discredited by—alleged—immoral behaviour).

As studies about US Senate elections show (Lau and Pomper 2004), the target audience can respond to negative campaigning in different ways. In some respects it seems to work, but it can also have the opposite effect, when people are deterred by what they perceive as obvious misrepresentations. It is unfortunate that we know so little about the effects of this type of campaigning in the ancient Indian context, but this might also be due to the ways in which we read the texts. Approaching them with these questions in mind might eventually bring to light more details about the marketing strategies of Buddhists than we can imagine right now.

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21. For this, see Brian Black’s detailed discussion in the present issue. See also Michael Nichols’s article, which discusses the construction of Brahmā as a positive model that can attract Brahmins.

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- BauDhS = *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*; see Olivelle 2000.
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