The Correlation Between the Term "*Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti*" by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV and the Thought of Siddhartha Gautama

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Abstract

"Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti" is a Javanese philosophy and local wisdom that literally means "reaping the fruit of one's own actions". This expression carries a moral teaching regarding the law of cause and effect, suggesting that every human action whether good or bad will eventually return to the individual. This study aims to examine the origins of the term, the factors contributing to its widespread dissemination, and its relevance as a life guide for Javanese society. The methodology used in this study is a literature review, involving the collection and analysis of data from various books and scientific journals. Analysis shows that the teaching of "Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti" has long existed and was documented in the Serat Wulang Reh, written by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV (1788-1820). These values spread widely due to the significant influence of the palace (Keraton) leadership, who were highly respected and obeyed by the community at that time. The study concludes that the philosophy of "Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti" serves as a powerful motivation to prevent negative behaviors such as greed and dishonesty, while maintaining social harmony through the principles of "rukun" (harmony) and "kesopanan" (politeness). In a modern context, this value remains highly relevant for implementation in ethical business governance and in building the character of the younger generation to ensure they have a strong moral foundation.

Keywords

Reciprocity, Karma, Reaping.

INTRODUCTION

The Local Philosophy Selected "*Ngunduh wohing pakarti*"

Ngunduh wohing pakarti this means that everyone will reap the fruits of their own actions. *Ngunduh* means to pick, *wohing* means fruit, and *pakarti* means action. Thus, *Ngunduh wohing pakarti* can be interpreted to mean: everyone will reap the fruits of their own actions. The teaching regarding the phrase *ngunduh wohing pakerti* has been taught since ancient times, as evidenced by the discovery of a text written

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by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV (1788-1820) found in the *Serat Wulang Reh*. *This Javanese proverb holds a profound meaning for daily life, emphasizing that every person must bear the consequences of their own actions.* From there, this saying has become a guiding principle and a foundation for life, deeply ingrained in Javanese society. In the context of *Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti* and setting a good example, one must discern, filter, and carefully consider the teachings or advice received. One must look at what is said, not who is saying it. If one chooses the wrong role model, it will have a detrimental effect on oneself.[1]

One of the Key Issues Raised

In Javanese society, there is a term that is often referred to as *Ngunduh wohing pakarti*. This concept relates to the law of cause and effect, the law of karma, or the principle of "you reap what you sow." It turns out that this concept is not unique to Javanese society; rather, it represents universal values and principles that are shared by many, even if expressed in different forms and terms. In this article, the author will explore the meaning behind the term *Ngunduh wohing pakarti* who lived among the Javanese people with the philosophical ideas of the Eastern philosopher Siddhartha Gautama.[2]

THE BACKGROUND

Siddhartha Gautama

Siddhartha Gautama was a teacher, philosopher, and spiritual leader known as the founder of Buddhism.[3] His father was a king and tribal chieftain named Shuddhodana Gautama.[4] His mother, Mahamaya, died just seven days after he was born, and he was raised by his mother's sister, Mahaprajapati. He married Yashodhara at the age of 16 and spent his youth in Kapilavastu.[5] Siddhartha was sheltered in the

[1] Iswatin Wahyu Ningrum, "Ngundhuh Wohing Pakarti dan Keteladanan dalam Serat Wulang Reh," *Jurnal Online Baradha* 19, no. 4 (May 10, 2024): 225, Doi: https://doi.org/10.26740/job.v19n4.p212-227.

[2] Hitesh Manubhai Patel, "Gautama Buddha's Philosophy of Educational Values," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research* (*IJMER*), Vol. 15 No 6 (2023): 62, Doi: http://ijmer.in.doi./2023/12.06.50 www.ijmer.i.

[3] Abhijit Das, "Universal Ethics and Human Cultural Values through the Teachings of Gautama Buddha: Some Observations from the Perspective of Philosophical Anthropology," *Journal of Contemporary Philosophical and Anthropological Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): 3,8, https://doi.org/10.59652/jcpas.v3i1.414.

[4] George Boeree, *Siddhartha Gautama Buddha*, 1-4, http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/BuddhistPsychology.pdf.

[5] Patel, Gautama Buddha's Philosophy Of Educational Values, 3.

palace and forbidden from seeing things considered commonplace by the common people, including the elderly, the sick, the dead, or anyone dedicated to spiritual practice. Driven by restlessness and curiosity, Siddhartha eventually witnessed the reality of suffering outside the palace: frail elderly people, the sick, corpses, and a monk renouncing worldly life. He realized the truth that all beings grow old, fall ill, and die. This led him to seek a way to overcome suffering. At the age of 29, he left the palace. For six years, he practiced extreme asceticism and self-mortification, but realized that these extreme practices did not yield answers. Siddhartha then decided to find a middle path between the extremes of luxurious living and extreme self-mortification.

Siddhartha lived and taught in the region bordering modern-day Nepal and India between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE.[6] The name Siddhartha Gautama means "one who has achieved his goal," while the name Buddha itself means "one who has awakened," "one who is enlightened," or "one who has attained perfect enlightenment." The exact dates of Siddhartha's birth and death are unknown, but some modern historians estimate that he was born between 623 BCE and died in 543 BCE, when the Buddha was 80 years old.[7]

Reasons for Choosing Siddhartha Gautama

Siddhartha Gautama taught values not unlike the concept of Ngunduh wohing pakarti, which has been practiced by Javanese society. These shared life values have evolved and been expressed through different terms, yet their core essence remains largely the same. The teachings of Siddhartha Gautama are widely known across various circles and from the perspective of Buddhism. Siddhartha Gautama was a teacher, philosopher, and spiritual leader known as the founder of Buddhism; for this reason, I have chosen his teachings to be compared with the local philosophy of Ngunduh wohing pakarti, which was selected earlier.

By drawing on the teachings of the philosopher Siddhartha Gautama, I hope to gain a better understanding of the term Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti as coined by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV, which has served as a guiding principle for the people of Java.

[6] George Boeree, *Siddhartha Gautama Buddha*, 3.
[7] Boeree, *Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, 3*.

ABOUT THE PHILOSOPHER SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

Political, Social, and Cultural Context

In the political sphere, many small kingdoms and republics began to stabilize under Magadha. The promotion of freedom of thought and discussion led to the emergence of the sangha community. One of the most significant political and social contexts during the Buddha's time was the dominance of the caste system, which caused widespread discontent. In the Buddha's time, the Brahmins acted like lords, and the other castes were enslaved to them. As a result, the common people were completely neglected, and discontent grew. The domination of one group over another, and the caste system that was established, only intensified competition between groups and became a tool in the hands of group leaders to pit people against one another. It is emphasized that if the Buddha's understanding of the criteria for a Brahmin (character and insight) had been universally accepted, the current Indian caste system would never have emerged.

In the social sphere, there was a rigid caste system and high levels of social inequality. The Buddha rejected the caste system and taught spiritual equality. The time and place where Siddhartha Gautama lived and where Buddhism emerged were marked by a crisis of human values, strict social domination based on caste, and a deep need to find a solution to human suffering. Indian society during the Buddha's time was characterized by a highly hierarchical social system, in which the Brahmins held dominant power. In the Buddha's era, the Brahmins acted like great lords, while the other castes were enslaved to them. The general populace was completely neglected, and this led to widespread discontent among the people. The Buddha intellectually challenged the Brahmin supremacy based on birth by analyzing the qualifications a Brahmin should possess (birth, knowledge of the Vedas, a charming personality, noble character, and wisdom).

In the cultural/religious sphere—Brahmanical rituals and Vedic ceremonies dominated. The Buddha emphasized ethics, meditation, and personal enlightenment. The cultural context during the time of Siddhartha Gautama was heavily influenced by the dominant Vedic/Brahmanical religious and social traditions, as well as a crisis of human values that drove Siddhartha to seek a new spiritual path. Meanwhile, in the economic and urbanization spheres, trade and cities were growing. Buddhist teachings spread easily among merchants and the common people. The era of Siddhartha Gautama (around the 6th century BCE) can be understood through two

main aspects: the economic conditions faced by society and how Buddhist teachings addressed the management of wealth and material possessions.

Intellectual Biography

The intellectual biography of Siddhartha Gautama traces a journey from luxury to wisdom, from an external search to inner enlightenment. Siddhartha Gautama was not only a spiritual leader but also a great thinker who taught a rational, ethical, and universal philosophy of life centered on awareness, freedom, and compassion. His intellectual journey was driven by a crisis of human values and culminated in the formulation of the Middle Way, which emphasizes rationality and right conduct. His intellectual journey began with a deep dissatisfaction with worldly reality and suffering, which drove him to seek the True Nature of Reality. The intellectual turning point occurred during meditation under the Bodhi Tree, marked by a series of profound insights. This process involved stages of deep meditation with an emphasis on purifying the mind to achieve concentration and tranquility.

THE TEACHINGS OF SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

General Considerations

Siddhartha Gautama's teachings constitute a philosophy of consciousness and inner freedom. He rejected the extremes of luxury and self-mortification, and taught the Middle Way a life of simplicity, mindfulness, and compassion as the path to liberation from suffering. Siddhartha Gautama discovered that neither the luxurious life he enjoyed in the palace nor the extreme practices of self-mortification led to enlightenment, so he found the Middle Way. Buddhist thought is an intellectual approach that places the highest importance on rationality and centers on the purification of the mind to achieve liberation.

Special Considerations

There is no effect without a cause, and no cause without an effect. Human beings are fully responsible for their own lives; what they experience now is the result of past actions, and what they do now will shape the future. At any moment, a person can change the course of their life by creating new, positive karma. Buddhist philosophy is fundamentally an empirical and ethical approach that emphasizes that humans are fully responsible for creating their own destiny through their actions and moral conduct. The concept that "There is no effect without a cause, and no cause

without an effect" is the philosophical foundation of Buddhism known as Dependent Origination. The concept of karma embodies the law of cause and effect on a moral and personal level, affirming that what one experiences now is the direct result of previous actions.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Synthesis

Ngunduh wohing pakarti has become the Javanese people's philosophy of life and a guiding principle in their daily lives. It is necessary to exercise caution in every action; in addition to believing that one will reap the consequences of one's actions, one must also believe in the law of karma that will befall them.[8] The philosophy of Ngunduh wohing pakarti means that everyone will reap or bear the consequences of their own actions. This reflects a strong belief that everything whether right or wrong, good or bad, happiness or misfortune stems from within oneself.[9]

This concept aligns with the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who taught that there is no effect without a cause, and no cause without an effect. Human beings are fully responsible for their own lives; what they experience now is the result of past actions, and what they do now will shape the future. At any moment, a person can change the course of their life by creating new, positive karma.

Critical Notes

Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti in the context of Javanese culture, it is not much different from the law of karma in Eastern philosophy. In Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, the term karma derives from the word *karman* which means action. Karma is the universal moral law that every human action brings consequences for the person who performs it. The same principle is expressed as "Apa yang kamu tabur, itu yang kamu tuai". The relationship between cause and effect or the law of karma manifests as actions and their consequences. There is a correlation between *Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti* and the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, which emphasizes the fundamental similarity between the two as universal laws of cause and effect.

[8] Purweni Widhianningrum, "Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti:The Moral Roots of BusinessGovernance Principles," *The International Journal of Accounting and Business Society* 31, no. 1 (2023), 75.

[9] Ningrum, *Ngundhuh Wohing Pakarti dan Keteladanan dalam Serat Wulang Reh*, 219.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of this paper is that Javanese local philosophy "*Ngunduh wohing pakarti*" shares significant similarities with the teachings of the Eastern philosopher Siddhartha Gautama, particularly regarding the law of cause and effect, or the law of karma. Local philosophy "*Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti*" This means that everyone will reap the consequences of their own actions. This saying has been taught for a long time, as evidenced by the teachings written by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwono IV (1788–1820) and found in the Serat Wulang Reh. This teaching has become deeply ingrained in Javanese society as a guiding principle and way of life, emphasizing that every person must bear the consequences of their own actions. In this context, one must exercise caution in every action and carefully evaluate, sift through, and consider the teachings or advice received.

Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, taught values expressed in different terms, but whose essence is not very different from "*Ngunduh wohing pakarti*". His philosophy centers on the concept that there is no effect without a cause, and no cause without an effect. This concept is known as dependent origination. Buddhist philosophy emphasizes that human beings are fully responsible for shaping their own destiny through their actions and moral conduct. The concept of karma embodies the law of cause and effect on a moral and personal level.

Based on the synthesis and equivalence of values: both concepts share the same core a firm belief that everything, whether happiness or misfortune, originates from within oneself. "*Ngunduh Wohing Pakarti*" In the context of Javanese culture, this is not much different from the law of karma in Eastern philosophy (Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions). Both assert that what one experiences now is the result of past actions, and what one does now will shape the future. The key point is that people can change the course of their lives at any time by creating new, positive karma. This is the same principle as "You reap what you sow."

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