

# Gender Representation in the "Kartini" (2017) Movie by Hanung Bramantyo

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## Abstract

This study examines gender representation in Hanung Bramantyo's KARTINI (2017), which depicts Raden Ajeng Kartini's struggle for women's rights amidst patriarchal domination. Using a qualitative approach, this analysis highlights Kartini's character as a symbol of emancipation, as well as the important role of education in women's empowerment. The film also explores Kartini's internal conflicts between social demands and personal ambitions, and shows the support of male characters as an important aspect in the fight for equality. The results show that the film not only honors history, but is also relevant to contemporary gender issues, encouraging discussion and reflection on women's rights in today's society.

**Keywords:** Gender Representation, Kartini, Emancipation, Education, Patriarchy, Gender Equality

## 1. Introduction

Learning media has an important role in supporting the quality of the teaching and learning process. Media can also make learning more interesting and fun. One of the learning media that is currently developing is audiovisual media (Arsyad, 2011). Through audiovisual the learning process becomes fun and can bridge students to understand learning material easily. One of the audiovisual media that can be used in the learning process is movie. This moving picture equipped with audio has long been believed to be able to provide educational value for children and all ages. Both industrial movies and special movies made for teaching (Khairiyah & Putri, 2024). Apart from learning, movies are a form of communication media that is quite effective for society. The mass media is an institution that connects all elements of society with one another through the mass media products it produces. Halawa et al. (2022) provides a definition of mass communication as communication using modern mass media including newspapers, movies, radio, internet and television. It is not surprising that discussions about mass communication always involve mass media as the object of research. Of the various forms of mass communication media that are quite numerous, one form of communication media that the author will discuss in the form of research today is movie.

Movie is a modern art form that combines various elements, such as visual, audio, narration, and emotion, to create a unique experience for the audience (Nurindah et al., 2024). As a medium of communication, movies have an extraordinary ability to convey messages, build emotions, and evoke thought. Since its inception in the late 19th century, movie has evolved from mere visual entertainment to one of the most influential cultural tools (Halawa et al., 2022). Through movies, stories and



perspectives from around the world are accessible to a wide range of people, creating bridges of understanding across cultures and time.

The history of movie begins with technical innovations such as cinematography, which allows moving images to be recorded and re-displayed. The first movies produced in the late 19th century were simple, often portraits of everyday life or stage acts. However, rapid technological developments, such as the use of color, sound, and computer effects, have brought movie into a more complex and engaging medium. It has also evolved into a major industry that influences the global economy through the production, distribution and consumption of movies (Pietri et al., 2024). As an art medium, movies have the ability to capture and convey a wide range of themes and emotions, from happiness and sadness to suspense and hope. Movie genres, such as drama, comedy, action, science fiction, and documentary, offer different experiences for the audience. Each genre has a unique approach to storytelling, reflecting the diversity of human creativity. Movies are also often a reflection of culture, raising social, political, and economic issues that are relevant to society at a certain time.

Not only as a medium of entertainment, movies also have an important role in education and public awareness. Through documentaries and history-based movies, audiences can understand past events, different cultures, or global issues such as climate change and human rights (Yang, 2024). Movies have the power to influence public opinion, shape perceptions and even mobilize social action. Therefore, many moviemakers use movies as a tool to convey moral messages, social criticism, or even evoke a spirit of change. In the end, movies are not just entertainment, but also works of art and media that can unite various aspects of human life. In every scene and dialog, there is hard work of moviemakers who collaborate to create works that can inspire, educate, or simply entertain. As a universal form of cultural expression, movie continues to evolve with the times, utilizing the latest technology to expand its scope and impact. In an increasingly connected world, movie remains one of the most effective ways to tell stories and bring humanity together through shared experiences.

The work of mass media is essentially to construct reality in society. Media content is the result of the processing of mass media workers in constructing various realities of life that have been selected and then poured into selected mass media such as print media or audio-visual media such as newspapers, advertisements in television and movie media. Media represents how the world is socially constructed to and by us, one of which is movie. Various movies have been produced with various purposes, such as for entertainment alone or as a cultural education tool, one of which is the movie "Kartini" which displays the reality where the patriarchal culture that is still quite thick among the feudal in Javanese society during the Dutch Colonial era in Indonesia is represented in the movie "Kartini". Literally, patriarchy means 'paternal power' or 'patriarch'.

Patriarchal culture in Java has created marginalization and there are invisible shackles that bind Javanese society where Javanese women, especially if they come from noble circles, they are limited in their freedom, shackled in body and mind. They only have to think about how they have to marry a man regardless of how many wives they are, are required to undergo a pingitan period from the time they get their first menstruation and are locked up at home, waiting for a noble man to propose to them and get married, while men are the ones who benefit more, because they are the ones who must be served and upheld like kings (Suhroh & Hairunnisa, 2021).

It is important for us to know how the patriarchal culture that creates a structure of social 'reality' that talks about issues of domination and subordination where there are equality and differences in the arrangement of life based on sex and gender in a patriarchal culture that is opposite to the feminist movement; represented differently in the movie 'Kartini (2017)' which gets a touch of modern society in the hands of Hanung Bramantyo as director and scriptwriter.

## 2. Methods

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a focus on descriptive analysis to explore gender representation in Hanung Bramantyo's "KARTINI" (2017). The main source of data comes from the film itself, which is analyzed through dialogues, characters, and narratives to identify emerging gender themes. In addition, supporting literature such as books, articles, and journals related to gender theory and the socio-cultural context during Kartini's time will also be used. Data collection techniques include repeated viewing of the movie to understand the details of gender representation, as well as text analysis to interpret the meaning behind the characters and symbolism. Where possible, interviews with viewers will also be conducted to gain a broader perspective. Data analysis is done by categorizing gender themes, interpreting the meaning of representation, and comparing with the social reality of the time. Data validity will be guaranteed through source triangulation, by comparing findings from the film and existing literature.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Recently, the study of women has attracted the attention of various scholars. Perhaps it is the recent trend of the emergence of female figures in political power in Asia that has made it a momentum for growing interest in the study of women. Gender relations are strongly influenced by power factors which will ultimately explain the stratification of gender roles that lean towards male power (Rosyadi, 2024). Women have long existed in Indonesian culture, namely the role of women as servants only. But if we look at the changes in the film's story, we can see how Kartini's character and the development of Ngasirah's character, the mother, become symbols of resistance to these stereotypes. Kartini 2017 is a biopic movie about the women emancipation fighters of the archipelago. This movie tells the life of little Kartini until her marriage (Fahmi, 2020). A symbol of Javanese women who is recognized as a breaker of tradition in her day. Kartini movie presents an idealistic and free-thinking female figure of Javanese tradition said to eliminate the traditional Paugeran wadon (Oktaviani, 2019).

Hanung Bramantyo's "KARTINI" successfully displays a complex gender representation through the main character, Raden Ajeng Kartini, who is portrayed as a figure who fights for women's emancipation amid patriarchal norms. Some of the analysis results include:

- a) **Strong Female Character:** Kartini is portrayed as intelligent, brave, and critical of the condition of women around her. She tried to fight against social and cultural restrictions that curbed women's rights. This character shows that women can be agents of change.
- b) **Gender Stereotypes:** The movie also highlights the gender stereotypes that existed in the society at that time, where women were considered only as wives and mothers. Through the narrative, we see how Kartini tried to change this view by initiating education for women, which was the first step towards emancipation.
- c) **Internal and External Conflicts:** Gender representation in this movie is not only black and white. Kartini experiences internal conflict between her obligations as a woman and her desire to pursue education and freedom. This shows the complexity of emotions that women face in their struggle.
- d) **Male Roles and Support:** The movie also features male characters, such as Kartini's husband, who despite being bound to patriarchal norms, shows support towards Kartini's dreams. This creates a positive feel of collaboration between genders in achieving social change.

Gender representation in the movie "KARTINI" depicts women's struggle to achieve their rights amidst patriarchal domination. Kartini is not only seen as a symbol of emancipation, but also as a representation of many women struggling in similar situations. In this context, the movie succeeds in presenting a narrative that is relevant to gender issues that still exist today.

### **3.1. Education as the Key to Emancipation**

One of the central themes in the movie is the importance of education for women. Kartini believed that education is a tool that can empower women to think critically and independently. Dialogues in the film often emphasize that women deserve an education equal to that of men. This reflects a feminist view that encourages women to pursue knowledge as a means to achieve equality. By educating women, Kartini is not only fighting for their rights, but also preparing a new generation that is more aware of the importance of gender equality.

### **3.2. Women's Conflict in the Context of Patriarchy**

Kartini's conflicts reflect the reality of many women in Indonesia. Despite progress in gender equality, many women still face pressure from restrictive social norms. The movie invites viewers to reflect on these challenges and provides inspiration to keep fighting. Kartini's internal conflict, feeling trapped between her responsibilities as a wife and her desire to learn, illustrates the dilemma women often face in finding space for themselves. This creates an emotional depth that makes Kartini's character more relatable to the audience.

### **3.3. Representation of Men in Supporting Emancipation**

The support from male characters in the movie also shows that emancipation is not a one-sided struggle. Collaboration between women and men is essential in achieving equality. Kartini's husband, although bound to patriarchal norms, acts as a supporter who tries to understand and appreciate Kartini's struggle. This indicates that social change can occur when both genders support each other, and not just through the struggle of women alone. This creates a positive vibe and hope that gender equality can be achieved through cooperation.

### **3.4. Social and Cultural Implications**

The movie "KARTINI" not only depicts history, but also highlights contemporary issues regarding gender. Today's society still faces challenges in terms of gender equality, and this movie serves as a means to explore how Kartini's struggle can inspire the younger generation. Through strong representation and evocative narrative, the movie encourages viewers to consider their role in promoting gender equality in their daily lives.

## **4. Conclusion**

Hanung Bramantyo's "KARTINI" (2017) deeply explores the theme of gender representation through the story of Kartini, a national heroine who persistently fought for women's rights in Indonesia. In the context of a patriarchal society in the early 20th century, the film depicts the injustices experienced by women, where they are often trapped in social norms that limit their roles and potential. Kartini, as the main character, shows a smart and brave character, trying to fight against the restraints by fighting for education and freedom of thought for women.

Kartini's character portrayal not only shows the individual struggle, but also reflects the collective challenges faced by women in her era. The movie features various interactions between Kartini and other characters, including family and society, which show the conflict between tradition and modern aspirations. Through the dialog and situations faced by Kartini, the audience is invited to understand

how important access to education and women's empowerment are to achieve gender equality. This is at the core of the movie's message, that social change requires courage and commitment to fight injustice.

Overall, "KARTINI" is not only a biography, but also a relevant reflection on gender issues that still exist today. The movie invites viewers to reflect on the importance of equal rights, as well as the role of women in the development of society. With strong visuals and an inspiring narrative, Hanung Bramantyo successfully conveys the message that the struggle for women's rights is an integral part of the struggle for wider humanity. The film's representation of gender provides deep insight into the long journey towards equality, and reminds us of the vital role women play in our nation's history and future.

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