

# Women, Electric Trains, and Emancipation

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### ABSTRACT

This article will discuss the position of women in public transportation in Jakarta in the short story "A Word in the Train Carriage" by Arsyifa Palan Tarlan. As it is known that Jakarta is an urban city whose residents commute from the surrounding area to work, study, trade, and other things. Most of Jakarta's population lives in the suburbs. One of the highlights of the shuttle is electric train transportation. This article tries to reveal how the position of women in public transportation is as depicted in the short story "A Piece of the Word in the Train Car" by Arsyifa Palan Tarlan. The method used is a qualitative method and the theory used is the sociology of literature. The result of the discussion is that this short story illustrates that women, in this case young women, are more sensitive to their hearts and feelings towards the surrounding environment than young men. This shows that the "emancipation" movement has moved to a higher level.

**Keywords:** *Women, public transportation, emancipation.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A work of literature represents its age. This is understandable since a literature work is written based on the surrounding social conditions. This research was conducted to examine the connection between social condition, especially in public transportation with short story "A piece of the word in Train Carriage" by ArsyifaPalanTaran which was published in Republika, Sunday, August 8th 2011. Problems with train as public transportation become primary aspect in this study. This story has a background in a train carriage in commuter line to Bogor. Other short story that has the same background is a novel titled 'Last Train' by PandirKelana. According to Murtini et al. (2019), this novel takes place in a train carriage from Tugu station to Purwokerto and from Purwokerto to Solobalapan station. Another short stories that take place in train is 'Last Train from Paris' by Mira W, novel 'Pukat' by TereLiye, novel 'Suti' by Sapardi Djoko Damono, and '9 Summers 10 Autumns' by Iwan Setiawan. In Iwan Setiawan's work, the train depicted is a train in New York.

This story by Arsyifa takes place in commuter line train to Bogor. It is well-known that train is one of the

most picked public transportation by people daily. Jakarta is, pretty much dense city with 15.663 person per kilometres. That's why prices of property bubble up. This is the main reason why people that mainly work on Jakarta choose to live in cities around the capital like Bekasi, Tangerang, Depok, and Bogor. People who travel daily from Jakarta and cities around it and the travel itself then called mobility commuter. The term means people moving from one region to another then comes back to their home in a day (Tiara Andriani Ahmadi, 2019).

According to one study, approximately 1.382.296 people in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, and Tangerang commute every day. This number higher than people who live in Jakarta. It is also discovered that train passenger was dominated by women with 57% percentage comes from Age 16-25, work in private companies, last education senior high school with average salary Rp2,6 - Rp5 million per month and commute purposely to work. (Tiara Andriani Ahmadi, 2019). This happened because men viewed from job and salary average as wealthy enough to buy their own vehicle to work while women tend to choose public transportation, especially rural ones (Purwati Asih Anna Levi, 2012). Women also perceived as more fit in

administration, secretariat and services work which were categorized as low-income and low-level work (Yoel Hasson and Mariana Polevoy in PurwantiAsih Anna Levi, 2012).

This situation then brings up question on how's position or situation of women in commuter train as public transportation that has higher percentage of passenger than men? Existence of women in commuter train can be seen as description in background of story 'A Word in Wagon'.

Method used in this study is qualitative method, which include an effort to dig and understand the dynamic that happened to individual or group of people that based in social condition or humanity (Creswell in Santana, 2010:1). Meanwhile, literature sociology approach chosen to analyse the literature itself. This done by assumption that literature work is a reflection of the social condition surrounded it, while the view of writer also should be considered in analyze the work later (Damono, 1993:7). Steps used in this study is using literature sociology approach that analyze the background of story such as locations, time, and social background. Researcher also consider about who's the writer and the publisher. More aspect such as connection between social condition of the people with background, characteristic, and main theme of the story is also analyzed.

## 2. DISCUSSION

The short story "A Word in a Train Carriage" was written by ArsyifaPalanTaran, which information about him is low to none. There are photos and youtube videos that he made himself. The only information about the author can be read on caption at the end of the short story. The author is a student who lives in the ASPIKA Girls Dormitory, Ibn Khaldun University, Bogor. Other works of this author have not been found. It is most likely this short story work is the first work published in print media. Another author's work that was found was a Podcast which was broadcasted on May 18, 2020 with the title "Salam Damai Brothers".

As previously stated, the analysis of this short story begins with a discussion of the background of the story. The first thing that is immediately visible in this short story is the setting of the place, Manggarai Station. Manggarai Station is a train station located on Jalan Manggarai 1, Tebet District, South Jakarta. The location of Manggarai Station is quite strategic as a transportation terminal (Soepoetro, 2009:24). This station is also a station that connects train lines throughout Jabodetabek. Manggarai Station is passed by the Jakarta-Bogor train line, also connecting the Bogor-Tanah Abang and Tanah Abang-Bekasi lines. This station is a connecting station for railway lines

throughout Jabodetabek (Soepoetro, 2009:25). Apparently, this station is indeed a busy station.

The time of the story in this short story is the afternoon. Therefore, the condition of the station and also the train is congested. This happens because the afternoon is the time for commuters to return to their homes. As stated by Ahmadi (2019: 3), commuters travel back and forth every day to the place of work or return from the location of work. They do it in a day and the afternoon is the time when these commuters return from their activities in DKI Jakarta to regions around DKI Jakarta.

This short story also describes the condition of Manggarai Station. The station is described as being in a state of "rush hour", which is a natural thing to happen since Manggarai Station was mentioned as a connecting station for railway lines throughout Jabodetabek.

The density of train passengers is also described in this short story.

*After the train came to a complete stop, people began to rush at the train door, ignoring warnings for passengers to get off first. Like impatient fleas, they burst into the carriage. Fighting is useless, this afternoon every carriage is full. Congested.* (Taran, 2021).

From what is described in this short story, it can be said that the passengers on the Bogor train have not received good enough service. Public transportation can be categorized as good if three basic criteria are met; comfort, safety, and speed (Dagun in Ahmadi, 219:5). The condition of rushing and scrambling to get into the train carriages is very much inconvenience. In such desperate conditions, of course, passengers who have limitations or disabilities such as the elderly and women will be disadvantaged. Physically when they are rushed, they will be defeated by men.

As stated by Ahmadi (2019), main problem in DKI Jakarta is congestion and one solution is to implement a mass-scale rapid transit system. One form of transportation that carries a mass-scale rapid transit system is rail-based transportation, the train commuter line. However, as illustrated in the short story by Arsyifa, the train passengers are still experiencing discomfort. They still had to scramble to get into the train carriages.

As stated by Ahmadi (2019) that the number of commuter line passengers is increasing every year. The increasing number of passengers was then compared by PT commuter line with increase its fleet. However, it still has not been able to meet people's expectations in using this public transportation.

The next setting in this short story is in a commuter line train carriage heading to Bogor. The character who tells the story in this short story is a woman. This character can be said to be young because from the dialogue he had with the passenger wearing a hat similar to Sapardi Djoko Damono, this female character said that she was still in college. He went to Jakarta, Kwitang, to look for books.

In the train carriage, the character is described as having a seat. The carriage that the woman was riding was a mixed carriage, not a women-only carriage. Since August 19, 2010 PT Kereta Api has provided women-only carriages. This carriage was held because so much sexual harassment of women in this public transportation (Wing Ispurwanto and VanyWidyaPricilia, 2011). However, will the women-only carriages put female passengers in comfort or in better place on trains? It seems that this has not materialized because as previously stated, there are more female passengers than male passengers. Female passengers recorded for 57% of all passengers (Ahmadi, 2019). This is one of the reasons why female passengers still have to ride in mixed carriage.

When a woman uses a mixed carriage, it means that the woman has to compete with the men. In this short story, the character, a young woman, gets a seat. However, when this woman got a seat there was another passenger who needed the seat more, an old man in his sixties.

The problem here is when the young male passengers don't want to give up their seats to the old man.

*Five minutes passed and no one stood up and gave a seat. I thought, don't they realize that there are people who need a seat more than them? Young, man. I'm fair enough since I'm a woman (Taran, 2021).*

The first thing that immediately appears is the issue of social concern. Young people or young men sitting in the train carriage is millennials. This generation is thought as a generation that spends time interacting in the virtual world. The pattern of interaction between people changes with the presence of digital age technology and this causes them to become indifferent, they do not care to values and they do not care about anyone. This millennial generation's social concern is considered to be starting to fade. Most of them become anti-social (Primasari, 2019). This is evidenced by their dullness to the people around them, including those who need more attention, as illustrated in Arsyifa's short story.

In addition to the issue of social carelessness, another thing that also interesting to discuss is the difference in orientation between the female passengers, in this case, the character and the male passengers. This young

female passenger is also millennials. He also holds a smart phone. She was also engulfed in her smartphone before the old man boarded, but this young woman turned out to be more thoughtful of others passenger. She was still paying attention to her surroundings.

This seems to be the advantage of a woman. In this short story, it seems that the female character has a higher social sensitivity than the male character. If this is discussed using a gender perspective, problems will arise.

As it is known that issues related to gender will be related to the issue of equality. As stated by Rahminawati (2001) that gender issues will change from time to time due to developments that affect the values and norms of the community. What is described in Asyifa's short story shows a change in gender orientation in the millennial generation. A generation that as previously mentioned is an asocial generation due to digital technology. The generation that no longer cares about the environment, millennial's environment is a virtual environment.

What is conveyed by the character Aku in this short story says that as a woman, it is natural to get a seat compared to male passengers is a gender bias. The mindset of the female character still influenced by the opinion that women are weaker physically than men, so that they are more entitled to have a seat. This is one of the mistakes in the meaning of gender, namely the assumption that women are predestined to have weak bodies, men have strong bodies (Rahminawati, 2001:277).

Thus, it can be said here that in terms of gender equality it doesn't matter who gives the seats to the elderly. It could be woman, or man. The issue of emancipation or gender bias in this short story has increased at a high level. Gender bias seems to be no longer the main thing. Equality is clearly visible in the pattern of relationships between men and women in the train carriages. A higher problem arises and this is a problem that must be faced by all people and all genders, which is the problem of social sensitivity and carelessness among the millennials or mobile phone generation.

Gender issues in this short story have changed into social issues, technological changes turned the generation asocial. The role of women has not changed, equality is already owned by women, but a transitional and egalitarian role emerges which results in three possibilities, one of which is the steady sharpening of the roles of men and women which fade, and the distinction is no longer clear (Ahdiah, 2013:1091). Young men and women in the train carriages have equal rights to a seat. Then the determining indicator is the individual's potential and ability (Ahdiah, 2013:1091). Whether it is a young woman or a young man who gives

a seat to the old man is determined by the ability of their social sensitivity and careness.

It turns out that later in Asyifa's short story, the young female character is the one who gives the seat to the old man. Is it the evidence that women have higher social sensitivity than men? This still requires further study.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The characters and writers of short stories published in Harlan Republika are the millennials. The author is a student. The main character in this short story is also a student who is described as living in a millennial environment. They are people who cannot be separated from mobile phones or smartphones. They are the Instagram generation. Gender issues appeared in this short story in relation to public transportation.

This short story take place in DKI Jakarta. A city that from year to year has problems with urbanization and congestion. In this condition, the role of public transportation, in this case the commuter line train, becomes very important. In Asyifa's short story, the issue of public transportation is linked to issues of gender and social concerns.

From the analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the position of women in train cars in public transportation is equal. The women can decide when and to whom she will give her seat. Only then is the mindset of millennial women still confined to issues related to gender bias, namely that it is men who should give seats to the elderly.

If this is placed on the issue of gender bias, what happens in this short story has actually increased on the issue of emancipation at a higher level, especially concerning social sensitivity. The equality obtained is now faced with the next challenge, which is the issue of social sensitivity.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This article is written by Erlis Nur Mujiningsih, Erli Yetti, and Suryami as main contributor.

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