

# INTERPRETATION OF RĀMĀYAṆA STORY IN A CYBORG COSTUME

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## ABSTRACT

The Rāmāyaṇa epic, an Indian work of literature, was reproduced in the Javanese language and even adapted to the Javanese cultural background. Its Javanese version stops at the part where Sita is brought back to Ayodhya and Rama is crowned as King. The moral values in the story are still relevant to today's modern life, especially the younger generation; therefore, the meaning of Rāmāyaṇa story in the cyborg costume becomes significant. The result of the transformation of the form of the costume in the Rāmāyaṇa story into a cyborg costume as well as the essence inside is expected to be able to become a critical reflection on the importance of moral values in society, especially in modern society. The creation method used is exploration, design, and embodiment.

**Keywords:** Interpretation of Rāmāyaṇa stories, Rāmāyaṇa Stories, cyborg costumes.

## INTRODUCTION

The Rāmāyaṇa story comes from ancient India, written around the 7<sup>th</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and then reproduced into Indonesian. Until now, the Rāmāyaṇa story can still be found in Indonesia, especially in the Java region. In the realm of performing arts, it can be found in *wayang kulit purwa*, *wayang golek*, *wayang orang*, and ballet performances. However, apart from a number of performing arts and fine arts that preserve the Rāmāyaṇa story, it is still not familiar to modern society. It cannot be denied that modern society prefers and is more interested in contemporary stories, even though the Rāmāyaṇa story has ethical values that are useful in building and shaping the nation's character. As

explained by Riyani (2005: viii), Javanese ethics contained in the Ramayana reliefs of the Prambanan Temple include manners such as etiquette, *tepo seliro* (putting oneself in somebody else's shoes), harmony (*rukun*), cooperation, and so on.

According to Hazim (1991: 40), the Rāmāyaṇa story entered Java in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Sriwijaya Kingdom. It was first disseminated via Gujarat from South India. The evidence for this is the existence of the Prambanan Temple in Yogyakarta and other evidence for the existence of the Penataran Temple in East Java. In addition, the story of Rāmāyaṇa in Indonesia can be found in Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa, which is a literary work written in the 5th century by Kashmir in Sanskrit.

The Rāmāyaṇa book consists of Bala Kanda (the book of Rama's youth), Ayodhya-Kanda (the book that tells about Rama while in Ayodhya), Aranya-Kanda (The book of Rama's wanderings in the forest), Kiskindha-Kanda (The book of Rama's episodes in Kiskindha), Yuddha-Kanda (book of war between Rama and Ravana) and Uttara-Kanda (book of conclusion). However, according to Stuttehein (1989: 1-3), when the story of Rāmāyaṇa penetrated the literature of the ancient Archipelago to Suwarna Bhumi Sumatra and Java, the figure of Rama as the divine hero had been glorified and considered a sacred legend as depicted in Hindu temples. Apart from presenting events like the original story, its dissemination includes additions, omissions, or changes. The characters selected in creating this cyborg costume are the figures of Rama, Sinta, Hanuman, and Ravana. The four figures are the main characters and often appear in the story of Rāmāyaṇa. In addition, according to Narayan (2006: 90) and Winternitz (1981: 455), the nature and characters of the four characters: first, Rama is an ideal man who, under any circumstances, can control his actions and thoughts, has a strong stance, and plays fair; Sinta is an ideal woman who is very obedient to her husband as a symbol of the highest female virtue; Hanuman is an intelligent, honest, responsible, and brave white monkey; Ravana is short-tempered, arrogant, aggressive, but responsible for what he does.

Until now, the narration of the Rāmāyaṇa story in Indonesia, in particular, can still be found in the performing and visual arts. In the performing arts, it can still be found in traditional *wayang kulit purwa* (Javanese), *wayang wong*, traditional Sundanese *wayang*

*golek*, and ballet performances telling the story of Rāmāyaṇa. For CentIndonesIndonesiagyakarta Special Region, and Bali, Rāmāyaṇa ballet can be said to be found in the centers of tourist deIndonesians that domestic and foreign tourists can appreciate.

Even though the existence of performi'g arts an' visual a'ts 'preserves' Rāmāyaṇa's stories, the 'acts show thatIndonesiaāmāyaṇa's stories are no longer familiar among young people. They prefer tales or stories with a mod'rn background about today's life. The lack of recognition of the Rāmāyaṇa s tisy modern society is due to the current lack of presentation of the Rāmāyaṇa story in the form of an alternative performance that is in harmony with the souls of young people. Alternative forms of presentation of the story will help convey the the values contained in the Rāmāyaṇa storyto the young people.

Paradoxically,intheprocessofintegrationandmodernization, the presence of traditional art can be a spokesperson when there is a cultural dialectic between new elements (Kayam, 1981: 66, in Hersapandi, 2011: 132). The purpose of this paper is to reintroduce the essence of moral values in the Rāmāyaṇa story to the younger generation and also to ground the Rāmāyaṇa story, especially on modern society.

The Rāmāyaṇa story contains nine moral values: introspection, love, obedience, loyalty, patience, self-sacrifice, defending the country, respecting parents, and maintaining self-purity. Meanwhile, loyalty like Rama and Sinta who are always loyal to each other, and respect for parents as shown by Rama and his brother to his parents t' defend the truth of Rama's struggle against Ravana is the moral message contained in the story of Rāmāyaṇa.

## **METHOD**

This research used the method of creation. According to Gustami (2007: 329), in producing a work of art, especially craft art, there are three main stages, namely exploration (searching for sources of ideas, concepts, and foundations of creation), design (the design of the work) and embodiment (work creation). Meanwhile, according to Sugiharti (2016: 20), the method of creating something new works with specific goals and uses. The

design method used in this creation is a way to create a design in the form of an image or sketch involving elements of fine art.

So in creating this work, the stages that were carried out are exploration, design, and embodiment. The exploration stage was carried out like a pre-design stage. Exploring also meant experimenting with materials and costume-making techniques. The second stage was the design which started with making a mood board and costume sketches for the master costume design that would be made. And finally, the embodiment stage was carried out to realize the designs into costumes.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Cyborg

Cyborg is a mixture of machine and living creature, which can be interpreted as half human and half robot. Marv Wolfman and George Perez created cyborgs. This character first appeared in the comic: DC Comics Present #26. It was about a scientist who had a son named Victor Stone. The child had an accident in a laboratory and was very badly injured. This frustrated his father. Because his father was a scientist and still wanted Victor to live, he experimented on turning Victor to become half human and half robot and was given the name Cyborg (<http://movimare.blogspot.com/2016/07/Asal-Usul-dan-Cyborg-Power.html>. Downloaded January 20, 2023).

Cyborg is not just a character in the DC Comics Present #26 story but has become a word with a broad meaning, like the RoboCop. This character is included in tiscyborg type because it is a half-human and half-robot creature.

Apart from DC films, some films present the cyborg theater, such as *The Terminator*. *The Terminator* is a movie about the invasion of an advanced technology to destroy humans, where the leading actor is a cyborg character. The characters featured in *The Terminator* and its sequels are half human and half robot, like DC cyborgs.

Suppose the cyborg character is transformed into a cyborg costume. In that case, it will have armor. The armor in question



Figure 1. Cyborg DC

(Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/211174972298579/>)



Figure 2. Arnold Schwarzenegger in movie *The Terminator*

(Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/615374736598437214/>)



Picture 3 Bio Mechanical Suit Costume

(Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/355573333091533530/>)

is a costume that resembles the shape of steel armor, only with different materials and manufacturing techniques. Armor costumes are made differently for men and women. The male armor costume is made very dashing, while the armor costume for females is made dashing but still accentuates the feminine side and maintains the female anatomy. The armor is usually made from glue, paste, and paint, with the main ingredient being 5 mm heart foam. As for the 3D patterns of the armor, a 3 mm heart mattress/foam is usually used.

### Rāmāyaṇa

The story of Rāmāyaṇa is believed to originate from Hinduism, which was then Indonesian by traders from India to Indonesia. Hinduism appeared in the Indonesian archipelago around the 6th century. It was later adapted into the Indonesian version of Hinduism. Over time, along with the collapse of the Majapahit Kingdom in Indonesia, Hinduism in Indonesia began to weaken. Then around the 8th century, the Rāmāyaṇa story was rewritten in ancient Javanese in the form of Javanese *kakawin*. The Javanese people believed that *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* was written in the Sanskrit language.

One of the Rāmāyaṇa stories is the work of the great and famous Wālmīki. Apart from that, the Rāmāyaṇa stories are also found in Javanese literary repertoire, namely in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*. This story according to Winternitz (1981: 458-475) consists of six *kanda* (books), namely: *Bālakaṇḍa*, *Ayodhya-Kaṇḍa*, *Araṇya-Kaṇḍa*, *Kiṣkinda-Kaṇḍa*, *Sun tis Kaṇḍa*, and *Yuddha-Kaṇḍa*. As for *Uttara-Kaṇḍa*, it's an added part.

*Bālakaṇḍa* tells the story of Rama's childhood (Book of the Childhood). It is said that Prabu Dasaratha (ruler of Ayodya State) had three consorts: Kosalya, Kekayi, and Sumitra. From Kosalya, Dasaratha got Rama, Kekayi gave him Bharata, and Sumitra presented Lakshmana and Satrugna. Once upon a time, a hermit named Wiswamitra asked for help so that his hermitage was freed from the attacks of the giants. As a wise king, Prabu Dasaratha sent his eldest son (Rama) and Lakshmana to overcome this and succeeded. On the instructions of Wiswamitra, Rama took part in a contest in Mithila's land and won it. He received

a gift from the king to marry his daughter, Sinta. Rama, Sinta, and Lakshmana then returned to Ayodya.

Ayodhya-Kaṇḍa says that King Dasarata had grown old and wanted to give up his throne to Rama. However, his promise to Kekayi when he married her hindered this. He had promised Kekayi that her son (Bharata) would become king. Although Bharata didn't want it, Rama was banished to the forest to fulfill his promise. Rama, followed by Sinta and Lakshmana, finally went to the forest.

Araṇya-Kaṇḍa (forest chapter) tells the exile of Rama, Sinta, and Lakshmana in the Dandaka forest at Kekayi's request. This was done by Kekayi so that his son could smoothly become king, even though Bharata himself disagreed with it. The departure of Rama, Sinta, and Lakshmana caused King Dasaratha to fall ill and die.

Kiṣkinda-Kaṇḍa tells the life of Rama, Sinta, and Lakshmana in the forest until one day, Sinta was kidnapped by Ravana and taken to the Land of Alengka. Rama and Lakshmana kept trying to find her until they allied with the monkey army led by Sugriwa and Hanuman.

Sundara-Kaṇḍa tells the beauty of Alengka Country, Asoka Park, where Sinta was kept. This section is filled with descriptions of beauty in poetic language. This part also tells that Hanuman succeeded in finding Sinta and burned the Alengka kingdom.

Yuddha-Kaṇḍa (battle chapter) tells the story of Rama's battle, with the assistance of an army of monkeys, against Ravana and his army. Rama and his army managed to cross the ocean to Alengka by building a bridge and managed to win the battle. Rama made Ravana's younger brother, Wibisana, the king of Alengka. To test Sinta's chastity, Rama asked Sinta to burn herself, and with the help of God Agni, Sinta did not lack anything. Rama then brought Sinta to Ayodya, and Bharata handed over his throne to Rama.

Uttara-Kaṇḍa tells of Rama's doubts about Sinta's purity and innocence. While pregnant, Sinta was taken by Lakshmana to the forest to be exiled. Sinta is then helped by a hermit named Valmiki to give birth to twins Kuṣa and Lava. Sinta then disappeared into the earth. At the suggestion of Valmiki, Kuṣa, and Lava finally



Figure 4. Hanuman's Shadow Puppet  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2023)



Figure 5. Rama's shadow puppet  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2023)



Picture 6 Rāmāyaṇa Ballet at Prambanan Temple (Source:<https://id.pinterest.com/pin/797137202815392465/>)

met their father. Rama regretted sending Sinta away and asked the earth to return Sinta but she was not allowed to. Rama was then told that he could reunite with Sinta in heaven someday.

It can be said that the Rāmāyaṇa story is an aspect of Indonesian culture, especially for Javanese, Balinese, and Sundanese people. It is a source of guidance for moral values and an aesthetic expression of *wayang* and traditional *da'ce*.

For some people, especially in the suburbs, the Rāmāyaṇa story has become a part of their culture where it serves as a barrier between religion and ethnicity, whose essence they have applied in their daily lives. It is different from modern society in urban areas, where they don't necessarily know anything about the story of Rāmāyaṇa, let alone the essence contained in the story.

The essence of the Rāmāyaṇa story contains a description of the eternal battle between good and evil. Rama represents good and Ravana represents evil. The fundamental problem in this story is the power of women over power and the powerlessness of women over men's power.

The depiction of male power over power can be seen in the *Ayod'ya-Kaṇḍa* story. The powerlessness of women over men's power is clearly illustrated in *Ut'ara-Kaṇḍa*, which tells of Rama's doubts about Sinta's chastity. Sinta had no power when Rama, the ideal human (male) symbol, asked her to prove her purity.

### Moral Values

The Rāmāyaṇa story contains nine moral values: introspection, love, obedience, loyalty, patience, self-sacrifice, defending the country, respecting parents, and maintaining self-purity. Meanwhile, loyalty as shown by Rama and Sinta who are always loyal to each other, and respect for their parents as shown by Rama and his brother to his parents to defend the truth of Rama's struggle against Ravana is the moral message contained in the story of Rāmāyaṇa.

From the description of the moral values contained in the

Rāmāyaṇa story above, it can be concluded that the Rāmāyaṇa Cyborg perfo'mance is expected to remind and motivate the nation's young generation to be able to carry out the moral values contained in the Rāmāyaṇa Cyborg story.

### The Concept of Work

As stated by Widodo and Nuning (2016: 436), in the beginning, the process of creating a work may occur in a mimetic process, referring to previous works is something that may occur and cannot be denied. From referencing at the initial stage to developing new possibilities, new findings, new creations the process of quoting previous idioms may have taken place.

The message that this work wants to convey is about the moral and ethical values in the Rāmāyaṇa story, which are still relevant today, especially in the Eastern world. This value is that women must maintain their honor because such women are able to become pillars of honor for the family, nation, and state. This value is relevant to modern youth who tend to ignore Eastern norms. Relevant to the theme and concept, the cyborg costume has four characters, namely Rama, Sinta, Hanuman, and Ravana.

The steps for creating this work are divided into four stages, namely: first, the pre-design stage. In this stage, data were collected through literature and pictorial studies. The literature study involved examining Rāmāyaṇa story to interpret the concept of the form. It also looked for the definition of cyborgs and their characteristics. Pictorial studies were used to trace pre-existing works. From the two studies, the originality of the work was found.

Second, the exploration stage was carried out to explore and experiment with materials and techniques used in making this work. Exploring ideas is a process of contemplating to generate ideas for the theme and design of this work. So, the initial stage in creating a work is exploration. This started from experience in doing previous works, thinking about objects, and observing sources from the Rāmāyaṇa story, which ultimately led to the inspiration for making cyborg costume designs.

Third, the design stage started with making an inspirational mood board as a benchmark for the next step, namely making a sketch that would eventually produce a master design. According to Surakhmad (1994: 132), mood boards are learning media for designers or people who study fashion and textile crafts to present

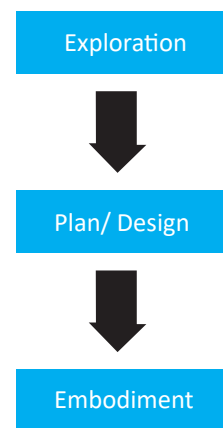


Chart 1. Work Creation Thinking



Picture 7 Inspiration mood board



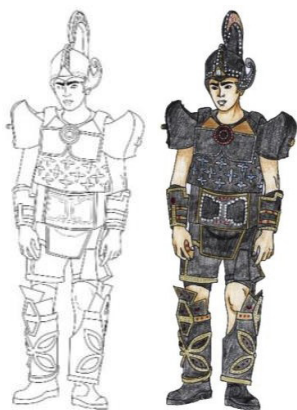


Figure 8. Rama Costume Design

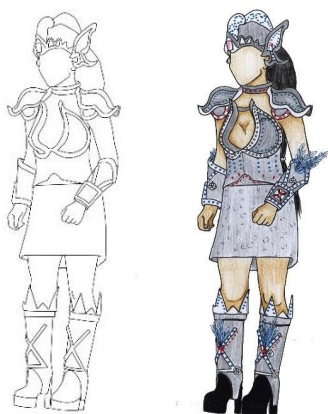


Figure 9. Sinta Costume Design



Figure 10. Hanuman Costume Design

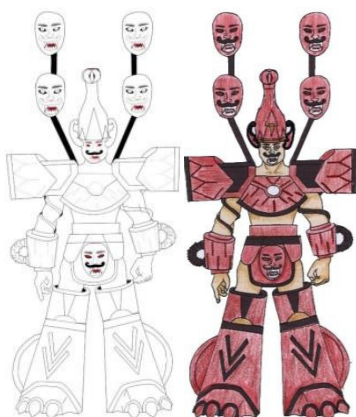


Figure 11. Ravana Costume Design

and discuss facts or problems studied in descriptive analysis. In making the mood board, the design of this creation was built based on two elements, namely cyborgs and the characters in the Rāmāyaṇa story.

The mood board is a visual reference for the work, namely the enrichment of traditional Rāmāyaṇa costumes that are more futuristic, both in terms of design, color, and current technology. The next step was to make a sketch or design.

The main characters taken for the creation of this work are Rama, Sinta, Hanuman, and Ravana. Each character has the characteristics described in the following table.

Table 1 Figures and Characters

Figure	Character	physical characteristics
Rama	An ideal man who, under any circumstances, can control his actions and thoughts. Firm stance, fair, and fair play (Narayan, 2006: 90).	Dashing, handsome, and dignified
Sinta	The ideal woman who is very obedient to her husband symbolizes the highest female virtue (Winternitz, 1981: 455).	Princess fall
Hanuman	Clever white monkey, honest, responsible, and brave.	Strong
Ravana	He is angry, arrogant, and aggressive but responsible for what he does.	Strong

It can be explained that the inspiration for this work was taken from the four main characters in the Rāmāyaṇa story with their own strengths and personal characteristics. These characters were transformed into a cyborg appearance through a design process in which construction and design were formed through exploration and experimentation in materials and mechanics (electrics and actu'tors).

The costume was designed by placing Rāmāyaṇa's character into cyborg form. Four costumes were made with different designs, as described in the following table.

Figure	Shape Idea			
	Color	silhouette	Accessories	The main material
Rama	Black, blue, red, silver, and gold	Y	Headpieces, dart guns,	foam and faux leather
Sinta	Silver, blue, red, white, and pink	H	Headpiece	foam and sequins
Hanuman	White, gold, red, and blue	H	Headpiece and <i>gada</i>	foam and <i>rasfur</i> cloth
Ravana	Red, black, gold, blue, and silver	X	Headpiece	foam

Table 2. Shape Idea

Fourth, the embodiment stage after the master design was created. It started with making patterns, cutting materials, shaping, constructing, and finishing works.

Costumes were made using foam, paint, and other supporting materials. The material was formed using crafting techniques, namely cutting and pasting materials. This technique is commonly used in making armor costumes. Carving and bending techniques were also used, namely the formation of costumes by heating techniques.



Figure 12. Embodiment Process

## CONCLUSION

Cyborg is a mixture of machine and living creature, which can be interpreted as half human and half robot. The creation of th's cyborg costume is a representation of the artist's imagination and expertise toward personal vision. It can be seen that cyborg costume is far from mainstream fashion, but it still has much to do with it.

The creation of a cyborg costume inspired by the Rāmāyaṇa story provides a framework for understanding that the Rāmāyaṇa story that has developed in society has values that are still relevant to today's life. Apart from that, the essence contained in the Rāmāyaṇa story, which depicts the battle between good and evil, Rama represents good, and Ravana represents evil. The fundamental problem in this story is the power of wome' over power and the powerlessness of women over men's power.



Figure 13. Cyborg Costume of Rama, Sinta, Hanuman, and Ravana

And to ground the Rāmāyaṇa story, which is aimed explicitly at modern society, the choice of Cyborg costume is suitable for presenting the Rāmāyaṇa story into the modern world without leaving traces of the values and essence contained therein. Apart from that, there has never been an adaptation of the Rāmāyaṇa story into Cyborg form. As for previous characters displayed in armor, they are not Cyborgs, they are armor for war.

Furthermore, costume designs inspired by the story of Rāmāyaṇa as the idea of creation requires carefulness in taking the references. This is because the sources of the Rāmāyaṇa texts are quite abundant. Meanwhile, creating a Cyborg costume requires exploration and experimentation regarding materials, shapes, and techniques because Cyborg has a character related to technology. This is necessary to be able to distinguish between regular armor and Cyborg armor.

The moral values contained in the Rāmāyaṇa Cyborg story are still very relevant to the current situation. Nowadays, it seems that many young people have forgotten the existing moral values and that it is interesting for the younger generation to watch.

In conclusion, this research is expected to contribute significantly to reminding and motivating the nation's young generation to carry out the moral values contained in this Rāmāyaṇa cyborg story.

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