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# Cultural Encounters: Puppetry Performing Arts (*Wayang*) and Dangdut Music as a Reflection of India-Indonesia Integration

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to reveal the relationship or social and cultural influence of the Indian nation on the expression of performing arts (*wayang*) and dangdut music in Indonesia. The hope of this research is to increase public awareness of the identity of national performing arts and music, which is rarely realized to be heavily influenced by Indian culture. Specifically, the aspects examined in this research include changes in the content of stories from Indian epics in the adaptation of Indonesian performing arts, as well as dangdut music that adapts the energetic spirit of music and dance from India. The method used in this research is qualitative with primary data sources derived from scientific articles and books related to the research. The data validation analysis technique used in this research is triangulation. Triangulation is used as a means of comparing the amount of data, to determine its consistency and accuracy, which will be displayed in the research. The results of this study show that, the culture brought by India is not really one hundred percent imitated or copied by the Indonesian people. The author concludes that the hybridity that occurs between Indian and Indonesian culture actually forms a new innovation in the field of art itself or can also be called a new work. The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories, which were originally the source of puppetry, changed and adapted to Indonesian culture. As a result, there are many compositions of the two epics, character changes, and the emergence of new characters that do not exist in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* themselves, such as the *punakawan* characters that are closely related to the spread of Islam in Indonesia. The same goes for dangdut, a music that was originally based on the character of Malay music from Indonesia, now transformed into a new genre called dangdut due to the influence of India, through political elements and the spread of Indian movies in the 20th century.

**Keywords:** Cultural, *Wayang*, Music, India, Indonesia

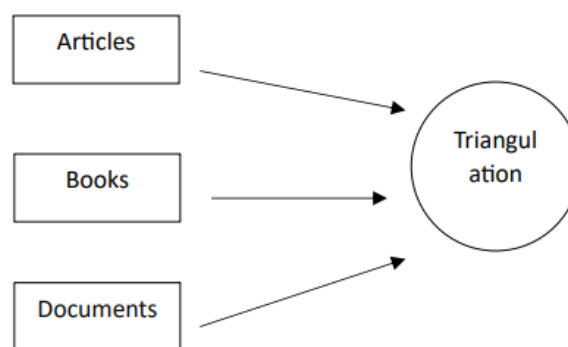
## 1. Introduction

India is a great nation with a civilization that has existed for thousands of years. With their expertise in making souvenirs and trading, their people often travel far and expand to neighbouring countries including Southeast Asia (Stark, 1998). One of the Southeast Asian countries that has established long-standing trade relations with India is Indonesia. This can also be seen from the establishment of the Kingdoms of Kutai, Tarumanegara, Kediri, Singasari, and Majapahit which were patterned after Hinduism. This relationship certainly makes some Indian culture indirectly absorbed into Indonesian culture, and the best known of course is the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories, which are famous epics from India that inspire the creation of puppet show stories in Indonesia (Jupriono, 2021). In addition, in the modern era, there is also dangdut music, which is a native Indonesian music that is thick with the influence of Indian musical styles (Seneviratne, 2008). Based on the previous phenomena, questions arise such as; how are the stories of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* interpreted in the culture of *wayang* performance stories in Indonesia, and how can the genre of dangdut music be so thick with the influence of Indian music?

That's why this article is here, to answer the previous two questions. It is hoped that this paper will address the knowledge gap of Indian and Indonesian cultural assimilation, as well as normalize the negative perception of foreign cultures entering Indonesia. There are several studies on the early relationship between India and Indonesia that do not specifically explain the transition of wayang performances and dangdut music in Indonesia (Trivedi, 2010; Zaman, 2015). This paper will discuss various things related to the previous question including; Indian kingdoms that had relations with Southeast Asia, Early Indian influences in Indonesia, General definition of *Wayang* Performing Arts, History of *Wayang* Performing Arts, Indian *Mahabharata* and its development as a *Wayang* story in Indonesia, Indian *Ramayana* and its development as a *Wayang* story in Indonesia, Differences in Interpretation and Innovation of Indian story figures in Indonesian *Wayang* culture, Dangdut music and politics in Indonesia, Influence of Indian films in the 50s and 60s on dangdut music, Dangdut musicians and their opinions on Indian influences, Dolls from India song by Ellya Khadam. The benefits of this paper will target two subjects, namely; the general public and academics, such as; (1) as an introduction to the depth and exploration of Indian stories in puppet shows in Indonesia, (2) knowing how the transition of modern Indian culture in the formation of the embryo of dangdut music in Indonesia, (3) being knowledge in shaping the national cultural identity of the Indonesian nation, (4) providing inspiration and innovation for the general public to preserve a pluralistic performing arts culture, as well as a stimulus for academics to further develop this research.

## 2. Method

The research method used in this research is qualitative. The characteristic of this type of method is that the data is descriptive narrative in contrast to the quantitative type which is numerical data. The instrument of qualitative research is the researcher himself, so it can be concluded that the quality of the results of this research is determined by the quality of the analysis and insight of the researcher himself (Fossey et al., 2002). The data sources of this research are scientific articles and books related to the influence of Indian culture in dangdut music and shadow puppetry. In the data validity stage, this article uses the triangulation technique, which in its application will compare various scientific sources to be confirmed and presented as reliable data (Thurmond, 2001). In this application, several scientific articles on Indian influences on *wayang* and dangdut music were collected, as well as books that have references to *wayang* and dangdut music, and related documents. The three previous sources were analyzed and searched for common points, after being valid, they were presented as data.



**Figure 1.** Triangulation concept  
(Source: Thurmond, 2001)

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. History

#### 3.1.1. The Indian Empire and Its Relationship With Southeast Asia

The Gupta dynasty (240-605 AD) was a kingdom that played a central role in ancient Indian history. Historically, its founder was Chandragupta I and married a Licchavi princess, and had the Magadha region within the dynasty's horizon. The peak of the Gupta dynasty came during the reign of Chandragupta II, also known as Vikramaditya. During this golden era, aspects of growing economic prosperity, increasing peace, and the development of art and science characterized this era. In terms of expansion, diplomacy and military success, the kingdom established good relations with various kingdoms in Southeast Asia. In addition, the emergence of famous centres of learning such as Nalanda University illustrates the importance of the dynasty's presence in the development of science. Likewise, the emergence of a strong culture of tolerance in this dynasty, the religions of Hindu and Buddhism, created a harmonious environment in ancient India whose values flourished in various countries in Southeast Asia. To be more specific, some scholars argue that the

Tantric teachings that exist in Indonesia today also originated from the Gupta dynasty.

The Pallava dynasty (275-897 AD) was a dynasty with an important presence in southern India, playing a very important role in shaping the history of civilization in southern India. The peak of the dynasty was during the era of Narasimhavarman I. The centre of Pallava power was located in Kanchipuram, and the dynasty is well known as a pioneer in Dravidian architecture, which can be seen in their monumental temples. Apart from southern India, the Pallavas also spread their influence in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Concrete traces of the Pallava dynasty can be seen from the Ligor inscription which is inscribed in Pallava letters, which is a remnant of the Srivijaya kingdom with its centre in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra.

The Cholas dynasty (300-1279 AD) was one of the most influential and powerful dynasties in Indian history. Historically, this dynasty played a very important role in shaping the culture and history of the Koromandel coast. The peak of the Chola dynasty occurred during the reign of King Rajendra Chola and his son (King Rajahiraja Chola). Their military might and administrative prowess enabled the dynasty to expand its territory as far north as the Ganges River, and as far south as Sri Lanka. Apart from the military, the dynasty also developed architecture and literature that were influential at the time. This can be seen from the distinctive buildings of their temples, such as the Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur. Tamil literature was also highly developed in this dynasty, as can be seen from the classical works that are still preserved today. The Chola dynasty's encounters with Southeast Asians can clearly be traced to the Indian invasion of the Southeast Asian kingdom of Srivijaya in 1017 and 1025 AD, clearly recorded in the Tanjore inscription in India. This certainly marked a major setback for the Srivijaya kingdom at the time, but it cannot be denied that the invasion also resulted in an unintentional cultural exchange between the two great empires, the traces of which can still be traced today.

### 3.1.2. Early Indian Influence in Indonesia

In early maritime history, the relationship between India and Indonesia had already occurred, due to the development of navigational knowledge that made it easier for some people to move or visit other countries. This inevitably led to trade relations. Some goods from India at that time, could be purchased in Indonesia, and vice versa. The goods were generally spices, traditional fabrics, metals, and manuscripts. In addition to formal trade, the arrival of Indians to Indonesia at that time also brought with it beliefs (such as Hindu and Buddhism) which would later be accepted by the Indonesian people, and gave birth to several religious kingdoms (Hindu and Buddhism) which can still be enjoyed traces of their buildings today. Some literary works of art such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* also mark the scientific exchange that took place between Indonesia and India at that time. It was also followed by its application in several performing arts practices such as dance and puppetry whose story sources came from the two previous literary epics.

From the previous explanation, it can be seen that the influence of Indian culture also indirectly shaped the national identity of the Indonesian people in the future. This can be seen from the relatively gentle transition and minimizing conflicts that occur, in influencing an ideology (Sezgin & Künkler, 2014).

## 3.2. Puppetry Performance Art

### 3.2.1. General definition of Puppetry Performance Art

*Wayang* is a traditional art form developed in Indonesia characterized by combining dramatic performances with elements of visual art. In its performances, shadow puppets generally use a leather screen, usually made of thinned buffalo or cow skin, in order to display the epic characters in the story with vivid images. A shadow puppet show involves a *dalang*, a performer who controls a leather puppet that is illuminated from behind by light sources or lamps (Cohen, 2007). The puppets are called "*wayang*", number in the dozens, and generally represent characters from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics, two of the most popular Hindu epics in Indonesia. The puppeteer is not only the physical mover of the puppets, but also a clever storyteller, delivering dialog, and presenting stories with a distinctive intonation of voice. Gamelan music is an important part of *wayang kulit* performances, providing a dramatic atmosphere and supporting the storyline.

Shadow puppet shows are also not just entertainment without value. Shadow puppet performances generally contain philosophical meanings related to the delivery of spiritual and educational values to the general public. To be more concrete, performances are also usually conveyed as a means of spreading religion (Setiawan, 2022).

### 3.2.2. History of Indonesian Puppetry

It is also important to analyze the periodization of the development of puppetry in Indonesia. Its origins date back to ancient times when the ancestors of the Indonesian people still predominantly adhered to animism and dynamism. In the former two beliefs, the concept of departed spirits will always live on and every living

thing has magical powers. By implication, these spirits can reside in objects around us such as; mountains, large woods, rivers, stones and others. In this combination of animist and dynamist beliefs, every person who was once in power during their lifetime will continue to be in power even though their body is gone. In addition to direct actions such as visiting a distant place to worship, the ancestors manifested the spirits of their ancestors in objects of their own creation such as images and statues. According to many literatures, the name of the ancestor spirits worshiped at that time was *hyang* or *dahyang*.

People at that time could connect with their ancestors directly to ask for help or protection. Or it could also be by using an intermediary who is usually called a medium or shaman. This ritual of worshiping the spirits of ancestors and shamans is the origin of the history of *wayang* performances in Indonesia. From the word *hyang* to *wayang*, the concept of a medium is embodied in the figure of a puppeteer. Likewise, the stories of the show are very thick with the stories of the previous ancestors along with the dynamics of the adventure. The language used in the early days was ancient Javanese, which is still largely felt in the nuances of modern Javanese. From the previous explanation, it can be estimated that the embryo of *wayang* performance has existed in Indonesia around 1500 BC. With the passing of the era of animism and dynamism, the development of *wayang* performance continued to advance following the reflection of the times, which later in the 4th century AD the religion of Hindu came into contact with this culture. This can be seen from the traces of the presence of Nusantara kingdoms such as Kutai and Tarumanegara (Sandi Utara & Sri Rahayu, 2021). During the previous kingdoms of the archipelago, *wayang* also developed rapidly and gained an even stronger foundation as a highly valued art form.

Due to global trade, and the strong influence of India on the kingdoms of the archipelago at that time, there was a very famous epic story from India that attracted the Indonesian people, namely the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories. The two previous epics were absorbed into every *wayang* performance in Indonesia. During the 10th to 15th centuries, *wayang* developed not only as part of religious rituals, but also as a medium for moral education to the community, so the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories were heavily modified and adapted. The popularity of *wayang* stories is evident from the recording of the stories during the Kediri, Singasari and Majapahit kingdoms in various temples and at that time the literature of *wayang* stories reached its peak (Subiyantoro et al., 2021). The classical writers who also recorded *wayang* stories are Mpu Sendok, Mpu Sedah, Mpu Panular, and Mpu Tantular. The popular *wayang* stories at that time were Baratayudha, Arjuna Wiwaha, and Sudamala (Afrianti, 2020). In addition, *wayang* performances that have been running well, are added to the innovation with the presence of musical accompaniment such as gamelan to enrich the storytelling to make it more interesting. At this time, *wayang* performances are one of the most awaited agendas by the surrounding community, and prove once again that *wayang* performances are proof of achieving high artistic quality.

Back to see the interesting thing about the presence of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories that inspired the previous puppet stories, although these two stories originated from India, Indonesian artists did not necessarily immediately equate the application of the puppet story from beginning to end exactly according to the two books. There were many changes and even additions here and there depending on the social and cultural conditions of Indonesia at that time. For a more concrete example, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* puppet stories were previously very thick with Hindu religious values which were also brought from India, but when Islam began to spread quite strongly in Indonesia, there was a strong reduction in this, the position of Gods and Goddesses who were identical to the teachings of Indian Hindu did not get their role anymore as God or as the "Almighty" in the puppet story. This of course also made *wayang* stories more varied and gave birth to new plays such as Banyu Suci Parwita Sari, Aji Narantaka, Cupu Manik Astagina, and many more. This is not strange, as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories have also been modified in other Southeast Asian countries to suit the cultural values of each country.

The identity of Indonesian *wayang* began to emerge in the era of the Demak kingdom, which was the largest Islamic kingdom in Java in the 15th century (Ilyas, 2020). *Wayang* performances in this era were heavily influenced by religious stores such as Wali Sanga. In fact, one of the Wali Sanga members, Sunan Kalijaga, was a very famous puppeteer at that time, and initiated changes in the shape of puppets that were formed thinner so as not to resemble humans (the prohibition of drawing animate beings in Islam) and puppet stories had many Islamic nuances, unlike the times a few centuries earlier which were still strongly influenced by the Indian Hindu religion.

### 3.2.3. *Mahabharata and Its Development as a Wayang Story in Indonesia*

The *Mahabharata* is an ancient literary work that is said to have been written by a man named Begawan Byasa or also known as Vyasa from India. By division, the book consists of eighteen books, hence the name Astadasaparwa (*asta*=8, *dasa*=10, *parwa*=book) but, there are also some scholars who believe that this book

is a collection of many stories that were originally scattered, and began to be collected since the 4th century BC.

The *Mahabharata* is a story about the conflict between the five Pandavas and their cousins, the Kuravas, over the right to rule the Astina kingdom. The culmination of the *Mahabharata* story is the Bharatayudha war at a location called the Kurusetra field and the fierce battle takes up to 18 days. Besides containing stories about heroism (*wiracarita*), the *Mahabharata* is also very strong with the content of Hindu religious values, mythology, and various instructions. Therefore, the *Mahabharata* is considered one of the holy books, and is very special for Hindus. The original story of the *Mahabharata* written in Sanskrit has now been spread and translated into many languages of the world, especially the influence of the *Mahabharata* story has spread in Asian culture, more specifically Southeast Asia. In the case of Indonesia itself, various parts of the *Mahabharata* such as *Adiparwa*, *Bhismaparwa*, *Wiarataparwa* and many of the other parwa have been composed in the form of a prose in the Old Javanese language, estimated as early as the 10th century AD (Subagia et al., 2021). It was during the reign of King Dharmawangsa in 991-1016 AD from the region of Kediri.

In later times, there was a new type of composition, called *Kakawin*, which means an old poem with Indian metrical standards and in Old Javanese. The most famous of these is the *Kakawin Arjunawiwaha* (about the marriage of Arjuna) composed by Mpu Kanwa. A work thought to have been written in 1028-1035 AD, it was dedicated to the then king Airlangga of the Medang Kamulan kingdom, who was the son-in-law of King Dharmawangsa. Another literary work inspired by the *Mahabharata* is the *Kakawin Bhratayudha* which was composed by Mpu Sedah and completed by Mpu Panuluh, which historically was dedicated to Jayabhaya (1135-1157 AD), written during the reign of King Daha or Kediri (Soebardi 1969). In addition, Mpu Panuluh also wrote a *Kakawin* entitled Hariwangsa during Jayabaya's time. He is also thought to have composed the *Kakawin Gatotkacasraya* during the reign of King Kertajaya (1194-1222). Several *Kakawin* influenced by the *Mahabharata* story from India above became very common stories and were often performed in *wayang* performances in the early days until the modern era.

### 3.2.3. *Ramayana and Its Development as a Wayang Story in Indonesia*

*Ramayana* etymologically comes from the words Rama and Ayana which means the journey of a man named Rama. It is a book from India that tells the story of heroism and love composed by a writer named Walmiki or also known as Balkimi. The *Ramayana* is a very famous epic, and is very influential and has spread throughout the world, as well as the *Mahabharata* epic. The narrative of the *Ramayana* generally tells the story of Rama who rules in a kingdom called Kosala, located on the north side of the Ganges River, with a capital city called Ayodhya. At the beginning, it is told about the birth of Rama by Dewi Kosalya, as well as the other consorts of Prabu Dasarata who gave birth to several children, who are dashing and adept at weapons. From here the dynamics of the story of Rama begin, first facing the dynamics that exist in the kingdom of Ayodhya, Rama goes to the forest and then meets a giant named Surpanaka and fights with him, Rama attacks Rawana with a fierce duek, and finally Rama returns to get his lover Sita back to his lap again.

In its development in Indonesia, the *Ramayana* story originating from the Sanskrit language composed by Walmiki was transformed into the form of *Kakawin Ramayana* (Javanese version) written in the Old Javanese song format and is predicted to originate from the Hindu Mataram period, precisely during the reign of Dyah Balitung around 870 AD. The nickname of this *Kakawin* is *adikakawin* because it is the first, longest and most beautiful literary work on the use of Javanese Hindu style language. In Balinese culture, the *Ramayana Kakawin* is believed to have been written by a writer named Yogiswara (Dwitayasa, 2023).

Some observers have suggested that the *Ramayana Kakawin* does not generally refer to Walmiki's *Ramayana*, but is more similar to the *Rawanawadha*, which is thought to have been written by the ancient Indian writer Bhattikawya. This hypothesis was presented by an Indian literature researcher named Manomohan Ghosh with the argument that some stanzas of the Javanese *Ramayana Kakawin* are similar to stanzas from the book of *Rawanawadha*. When analyzed from the storyline of the *Ramayana Kakawin*, it also has a striking difference with Walmiki's version of the *Ramayana*. It can be seen at the end of the story, in Walmiki's *Ramayana*, although Rama and Sita returned to Ayodya, they were eventually separated again and concluded not to live together. But in the *Ramayana Kakawin* Rama and Sita end up living together in Ayodya.

Due to its popularity, *Kakawin Ramayana*, which was originally inspired by the *Ramayana* story from India, has now been transformed into a Javanese *tembang macapat* (song in Javanese style) called *Serat Rama*. This work was created by a Javanese court poet named Yasadipura I in the early 18th century and is currently the source of the modern puppet show *Ramayana* ballet at Prambanan temple. Besides *Serat Rama*, there is another treasury work inspired by *Kakawin Ramayana*, namely *Serat Kanda*. *Serat Kanda* has been heavily modified, with many Islamic values inserted and the Pandavas who are usually identified with our epic



*Mahabharata* appearing (Fawaaid et al., 2022)



**Figure 2.** *Ramayana* ballet at Prambanan Temple: the development of the modern version of *wayang wong*  
(Source: Klook and Antara News Yogyakarta)

#### 3.2.4. Differences in Interpretation and Innovation of Indian Story Figures in Indonesian Wayang Culture

First, in the Indian version, Drupadi is described as the wife of the five Pandavas (Arjuna, Bima, Nakula, Sadewa, Yudhistira). But very different from the Javanese version, Drupadi did not marry all the Pandavas but only married Yudhistira. This is of course because the story must adapt to Indonesian culture to avoid conflict. In the general beliefs of Indonesian society, no one recognizes the concept of women who can be polygamous (Islamic teachings) or have more than one husband, so Drupadi is described as only marrying Yudhistira (monogamous). Secondly, the character Shikandi in Indian stories is born as a woman and treated like a man. In the end, Shikandi really became a man by exchanging her sex with a man. The concept of Shikandi in the previous Indian version is also different from the Javanese version, where in the Javanese version Shikandi is just a woman who is trained like a warrior and finally adept at using arrows as an instrument in war. It can be analyzed that, the Shikandi character who can change sex is very much rejected by Indonesian culture, because it is again contrary to religious teachings (Islam).

Third, the character Gandari, if in the Indian story, still loves and gives love to the Pandavas, even though they are not her own children, but in the Javanese version the characterization is very much different. In the Javanese version Gandari is depicted and told to hate the Pandavas, and Gandari raised them with hatred. Fourth, the Punawakan character is a character that cannot be found in Indian stories. The *Punakawan* figures are innovations from Indonesia, which consist of Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong who are tasked with nurturing the Pandavas so that they will grow up well and be ready to face battles, while one of the other *Punakawan* is named Togog, he is tasked with nurturing the Kurawa. Fifth, the Gatotkaca and Tiwikrama characters are described as superhuman in the Javanese version of the story. Gatotkaca is said to be able to fly and has wire muscles and iron bones, while Tiwikrama is described as having extraordinary vision and hearing.



**Figure 3.** *Punakawan* in Wayang.  
(Source: halojabar.com)



**Figure 4.** Gatotkaca in Wayang Java  
(Source: Pinterest)

### 3.3. Dangdut Music

#### 3.3.1. Dangdut music and politics in Indonesia

Dangdut is one of the most popular music genres, and it's native to Indonesia. It is also believed to be a mixture and influence of the musical culture in India. The characteristic of dangdut music is the use of drum beats with dang and dut. Some of the instruments that are commonly used in every dangdut performance are drums, flutes and tambourines. Drum is a type of membranophone musical instrument whose sound source comes from the skin of the instrument. Flute is a type of aerophone that is generally made of bamboo and its sound source comes from the air that humans exhale into the flute. Tambourine is a type of percussion music, made from a round wooden frame with thin metal plates on each side, the sound source of tambourine comes from the metal plates that are shaken by the players (Weintraub, 2013).

Moving on to the politics of dangdut in Indonesia, after independence, it was actually very difficult for outside cultures to enter Indonesia smoothly. This was due to the directives of Indonesia's first president Soekarno, who had been traumatized by previous imperialism and was very anti foreign culture. But that was only for American and European culture, unlike the Indian culture that Soekarno allowed in. This can be seen from the importation of Indian movies (musicals) that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s (Frederick 1982), which became one of the embryonic formers of dangdut music in Indonesia. Slightly different from the Soeharto era of Indonesia's second president, who became the initiator of the New Order in 1966-1967. During Soeharto's tenure, popular music recordings, including dangdut, experienced a decline. This was due to the political dynamics that occurred at the time, so the development of musical entertainment was not a priority. But gradually, after the political situation in Indonesia improved, coupled with the collapse of the New Order and Soeharto in 1998, freedom of speech and music creation flourished again. This made dangdut music popular again and Indian movies (musicals) became more popular.

#### 3.3.2. The Influence of Indian Movies in the 1950s and 1960s on Dangdut Music

The presence of Indian films played a significant role in the development of dangdut music in Indonesia. In particular, the mass production of Indian films, which entered Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s, had a strong influence on the musical style and appearance of the music entertainment industry in Indonesia. Films from India, also known as Bollywood films, are characterized by energetic music and dance scenes, followed by the use of traditional music from India such as table and harmonium. The melodramatic styles in these Indian films provided inspiration for Indonesian artists, especially for dangdut singers (Hidayatullah 2017).

The most noticeable influence can be seen in stage performances. Many Indonesian dangdut singers adapted and developed elements of Indian dance to complement their performances, as well as the combination of Indian and traditional Indian musical instruments. In addition, the themes of love, daily life and happiness in Indian Bollywood movie songs became an inspiration in creating the lyrics of dangdut songs. With a soulful singing style and easy listening melodies, it was the inspiration found in Indian movies to develop dangdut music in Indonesia. Therefore, it can be concluded that the presence of Indian movies influenced the formation of the dangdut music genre that is very popular in Indonesia. Modern Malay songs contain Indian themes and these themes serve to enhance Malay songs. In today's Malay songs we hear small embellishments that sound like the small steps of a happy child. This characteristic comes from the influence of Indian songs (from Indian movies) (Weintraub, 2010).

#### 3.3.3. A Dangdut Musician and His Take on the Indian Influence

Rhoma Irama is a musician born on December 11, 1946. Rhoma Irama is known as the king of dangdut in Indonesia. The presence of Rhoma Irama has also marked the development of the dangdut music industry in Indonesia. This is due to the popularity of his songs when listened to by the general public. Rhoma Irama's singing style is characterized by his strong and expressive vocals followed by a lively musical accompaniment. Generally, the lyrics of songs performed by Rhoma Irama contain moral and social messages that reflect the journey of everyday life. This, of course, makes Rhoma Irama's dangdut music very close to the people. With a brilliant career, Rhoma Irama got many opportunities to go further in the entertainment world, not only known as a dangdut singer, but also as an actor in many movies. Not infrequently, Rhoma Irama also acts as a soundtrack filler in every movie he stars in.

*I wrote the song "Viva Dangdut" to document the history of the genre (which he sings): "Dangdut is the sound of the drum, the rhythm is played over and over again, Dangdut is the sound of the drum, So lively that it became the name of the music [genre]. This is Malay music, originally from Deli, then influenced by the West and India." (Rhoma Irama, personal communication/Weintraub A, July 14, 2005).*

(Weintraub, 2010).

Elvy Sukaesih is a famous dangdut diva who was born on June 25, 1951. In the field of dangdut music, this musician is one of the most important and iconic figures in shaping and carving the history of dangdut music in Indonesia. Elvy Sukaesih's achievements are not only as a phenomenal dangdut diva with a unique and distinctive voice, but she is also known as a competent dangdut songwriter. At the peak of her career, Elvy Sukaesih was not only known as a national-level dangdut singer, but was also famous in various neighbouring Malay countries such as Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. To this day, despite her age, Elvie Sukaesih is still active and present in the Indonesian music industry, monitoring and providing input to the dangdut music industry in Indonesia. An interesting statement was made by Elvy Sukaesih regarding the embryo of dangdut, which is closer to Indian influences.

*If someone says dangdut is Malay, I would not agree because Malay music and dangdut music are different. [she demonstrates the rhythm] Malay is Malay. Malay refers to a type of music that exists in Deli [North Sumatra]. Listen to songs like "Burung Putih" or "Tanjung Katung" [where she sings] "the water is blue, a place to wash your face." The dangdut lyrics are different. [she sings] "Who is he who always teases me? When he looks at me, I feel a tremor in my heart." I want to set the record straight. Dangdut is not Malay. It has more Indian elements, and is specific to India. (Elvy Sukaesih, personal communication/Weintraub A, July 20, 2005). (Weintraub, 2010).*

Ellya Khadam is one of the pioneering musicians of dangdut and a famous film performer in Indonesia who was born on October 23, 1928. Elly Khadam's early career began with her participation in the Kelana Ria Malay orchestra, which became the forerunner of the dangdut music genre in Indonesia. Aside from being a dangdut singer with a distinctive voice, Ellya Khadam is also known as a prolific dangdut music composer. One of her most famous musical works is "Dolls from India", which she created in 1957 and whose stage and decorations were heavily inspired by Indian culture.

*I use ornaments [cengkok] I learned from listening to Indian music records. I like Indian songs because they are different. They are very moving and seductive. They capture the sound of people in love. (Ellya Khadam, personal communication/ Weintraub A, July 18, 2005). (Weintraub, 2010).*



**Figure 5.** Rhoma Irama  
(Source: Rhoma Irama Official)



**Figure 6.** Elvy Sukaesih  
(Source: Wikipedia)



**Figure 7.** Ellya Khadam  
(Source: CNBC Indonesia)



### 3.3.4. Song *Boneka dari India/ Puppet from India Ellya Khadam (Indian background dangdut music inspiration)*

*Hatiku gembira  
riang tak terkira  
mendengar berita  
kabar yang bahagia*

*Ayahku kan tiba  
datang dari India  
membawa boneka  
yang indah jelita  
Oh sayang...*

*Boneka cantik  
ku mimpi-mimpi  
menjadi idaman  
sepanjang hari*

*Kini ku dapat  
boneka baru  
untuk hadiah  
ulang tahunku*

*Boneka yang indah  
pandai main mata  
hatiku gembira  
riang tak terkira*

*Ku ayun ku buai  
ku dendangkan sayang  
tidurlah hai si buyung  
juwitaku sayang*

*Oh sayang...  
Boneka sayang...  
berbaju biru  
boleh dipandang  
tak boleh diganggu*

*Boneka cantik  
dari India  
boleh dilirik  
tak boleh dibawa*

*Hatiku gembira  
riang tak terkira  
mendengar berita  
kabar nan bahagia*

*Ayahku kan tiba  
datang dari India  
membawa boneka  
yang indah jelita*

*Oh sayang...*

*La... la la la la...  
La... la la la la...*

The song is titled *Boneka dari India* popularized by Ellya Khadam, with the nuances of a song that is full of joy and happiness. In general, the meaning of the lyrics describes the happiness of a child and her anticipation of her father's arrival with a special gift in the form of a doll from India. When investigated, the use of the metaphor "doll" in this song gives a romantic feel and depicts how special the gift is. Dolls are used as a symbol of beauty and happiness brought by a father from India. Dolls in the song lyrics are not only reflected as toys. But it also reflects the father's love for his child. This can be analyzed from the father's awareness to buy all the way from India.

## 4. Conclusion

From all the explanations above, it can be concluded that the culture brought by India is not really one hundred percent imitated or copied by the Indonesian people. The author concludes that the hybridity that occurs between Indian and Indonesian culture actually forms a new innovation in the field of art itself or can also be called a new work. For example, as explained earlier, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* stories, which were originally the source of puppetry, changed and adapted to Indonesian culture. As a result, there were many compositions of the two epics, changes in character, and the emergence of new characters that were not in the Indian versions of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The same goes for dangdut music, a music that was originally based on the character of Malay music typical of Indonesia, now changed to form a new genre called dangdut music due to the influence of Indian music, which was imported and represented in Indian films (musicals) that began to massively enter Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s during the Soekarno presidency.

The limitations of this research include the availability of historical sources, which may change with each discovery. In addition, there is also the possibility of interpretation errors in this research because it cannot be avoided from subjectivity. It is hoped that in the future, there will be further research on the influence of Indian

art and culture elements in Indonesia with more comprehensive sources and involving many related parties, to avoid bias in the presentation of scientific historical data.

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