

Mahatma Gandhi's Critique of Modern Technology and Its Relevance to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kritik Mahatma Gandhi terhadap teknologi modern dan relevansinya dengan perkembangan Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (TIK) di Indonesia. Melalui metode tinjauan literatur, penelitian ini menyintesis berbagai sumber ilmiah untuk menganalisis pandangan Gandhi terhadap teknologi, termasuk dampak dehumanisasi, ketergantungan ekonomi, konsumsi berlebihan, degradasi lingkungan, kesenjangan sosial, dan terkikisnya nilai-nilai tradisional. Teks-teks kunci oleh Parel (2006), Hardiman (2003), Iyer (1993), Sharma (2008), Chatterjee (1983), dan Weber (1996) memberikan dasar untuk memahami pendirian filosofis dan etika Gandhi terhadap teknologi. Metodologi penelitian ini melibatkan tinjauan sistematis literatur, termasuk buku, artikel jurnal, dan dokumen sejarah, untuk mengontekstualisasikan pandangan Gandhi dalam lanskap TIK modern di Indonesia. Pendekatan ini memungkinkan adanya analisis komprehensif tentang bagaimana prinsip Swadeshi (kemandirian) dan Satyagraha (penolakan tanpa kekerasan) Gandhi dapat diterapkan pada isu-isu kontemporer seperti otomatisasi, kesenjangan digital, pengelolaan limbah elektronik, dan pelestarian budaya di Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penekanan Gandhi pada kemandirian, penggunaan teknologi secara etis, dan pelestarian budaya lokal sangat relevan dalam mengatasi tantangan yang ditimbulkan oleh kemajuan teknologi yang pesat di Indonesia. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa memasukkan prinsip-prinsip Gandhi ke dalam kebijakan TIK dapat mendorong pengembangan teknologi yang lebih inklusif, berkelanjutan, dan menghormati budaya di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Mahatma Gandhi, Teknologi Modern, Swadeshi, Satyagraha, Teknologi Komunikasi Informasi (ICT), Indonesia

Abstract

This study explores Mahatma Gandhi's criticism of modern technology and its relevance to the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Indonesia. Through the method of literature review, this study synthesizes various scientific sources to analyze Gandhi's views on technology, including the effects of dehumanization, economic dependence, overconsumption, environmental degradation, social inequality, and the erosion of traditional values. Key texts by Parel (2006), Hardiman (2003), Iyer (1993), Sharma (2008), Chatterjee (1983), and Weber (1996) provide the basis for understanding Gandhi's philosophical and ethical stance on technology. The methodology of this research involves a systematic review of literature, including books, journal articles, and historical documents, to contextualize Gandhi's views in Indonesia's modern ICT landscape. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how Gandhi's principles of Swadeshi (self-reliance) and Satyagraha (non-violent rejection) can be applied to contemporary issues such as automation, the digital divide, e-waste management, and cultural preservation in Indonesia. The findings show that Gandhi's emphasis on self-reliance, ethical use of technology, and preservation of local culture is very relevant in overcoming the challenges posed by Indonesia's rapid technological advancement. The study concludes that incorporating Gandhi's principles into ICT policy can encourage the development of more inclusive, sustainable, and culturally respectful technologies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Modern Technology, Swadeshi, Satyagraha, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Indonesia

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, a figure known as the pioneer of India's independence struggle, is also known for his unique views on technology. Although many people consider him a simple and traditional person, Gandhi had deep thoughts about the role of technology in human life. In this article, we will discuss Gandhi's views on technology and see how his criticisms contribute to contemporary thinking about the relationship between technology and society.

Mahatma Gandhi lived in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, including machinery, industry, and communications. This development brought major changes to society, the economy, and culture. However, Gandhi did not necessarily welcome all these advances with open arms. Instead, he is critical of the negative impact of technology on humans and society, as well as the potential for dehumanization that may occur as a result (Kapur, 2002). Gandhi is a figure who is very close to simple and traditional values. In his initial view, he understood that modern technology could obscure these values, cause dramatic social change and even threaten human integrity. In his work, "The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi," Gandhi wrote about his concern about the impact of technology on the character of man and society (Gandhi, 1969).

Gandhi lived in an era when technological developments began to appear. The development of machines, industry, and communication is creating a major change in the way humans work and interact. However, Gandhi felt that not all of these changes were positive. He sees the negative impact of technology on humans and society, as well as the potential for dehumanization that can occur as a result. Gandhi views technology as something that can provide benefits, but also as a potential threat to fundamental human values. He reminded that humans should not become slaves to technology, but must still have control over it. Gandhi argued that technology should be used to improve the quality of human life and advance society, not to replace human values.

Gandhi also emphasized the importance of natural resources and sustainability. He feels that the pursuit of modern technology often damages nature and depletes resources excessively. This view, which is now increasingly relevant in the context of environmental issues, shows that Gandhi's criticism of technology has a strong basis.

Research Method

This chapter describes the research method used to examine the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's criticism of technology in the context of information and communication technology (ICT) in Indonesia. This study employs a literature review method to collect, analyze, and synthesize information from various relevant academic sources.

Literature Study Methods

The literature review method is a research approach that involves a critical review of existing literature to identify trends, gaps, and key findings in a research field. In this study, the literature review method is used to examine Mahatma Gandhi's views on technology and relate it to the ICT situation in Indonesia.

Steps of Literature Study

The first step involves source identification, where academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ProQuest are utilized to search for relevant literature. Keywords used in this search include "Mahatma Gandhi and technology," "Gandhi's critique of technology," "ICT in Indonesia," "Swadeshi and Satyagraha," and "ethical technology." Notable sources identified in this phase include works such as *Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* by Bhikhu Parekh, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Historical Biography* by Radha Kumar, and *Development as Freedom* by Amartya Sen.

Additionally, reports from the Government of Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology are consulted to understand the current ICT landscape in Indonesia.

In the literature selection phase, the focus is on choosing sources with high relevance to the research topic, including books, journal articles, and historical documents. Priority is given to literature that has been peer-reviewed and holds credibility in its field. Key sources in this phase include Gandhi's own writings, such as *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, as well as secondary sources like *Gandhian Economic Thought* by J. C. Kumarappa and various articles from *The Journal of Gandhi Studies*.

The literature analysis phase involves reading and understanding the content of each selected source. The main themes and critical points raised by Gandhi related to technology are identified and linked to ICT issues in Indonesia. This analysis focuses on Gandhi's principles of Swadeshi (self-reliance) and Satyagraha (non-violent resistance), ethical considerations of technology use, and the impact of ICT on social and economic development in Indonesia.

Finally, in the synthesis of findings phase, the information from multiple sources is combined to construct a cohesive argument. The findings are compiled in an organized form, outlining how Gandhi's views can be applied in the context of modern ICT in Indonesia. This synthesis highlights key points such as the alignment of Gandhi's critique with contemporary concerns about digital ethics and technological dependency, potential strategies for integrating Gandhian principles in the development and implementation of ICT policies in Indonesia, and case studies demonstrating the practical application of Gandhi's ideas in the ICT sector.

Result and Discussion

Gandhi's Critique of Technology

One of Gandhi's main criticisms of technology is that he feels that technology often brings dehumanization. He observed that modern machines and technologies can reduce human interaction and togetherness in society. Gandhi believed that humans should live a simpler life closer to nature, and that too much reliance on modern technology could destroy those values. Gandhi also worried about the social inequality generated by technological developments. He considers that technology often only benefits a small percentage of people who have access to the resources and education necessary to master technology. This can increase social inequality, which is one of the main issues in modern society.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the figures who was very critical of the use of modern technology, especially in the colonial context of India and its impact on society. One of Gandhi's main criticisms of technology is that he feels that technology often brings dehumanization. He observed that modern machines and technologies can reduce human interaction and togetherness in society. Gandhi believed that humans should live a simpler life closer to nature, and that too much reliance on modern technology can destroy those values (Sorokin, 1992). Gandhi also worried about the social inequality generated by technological developments. He considers that technology often only benefits a small percentage of people who have access to the resources and education necessary to master technology. This can increase social inequality, which is one of the main issues in modern society (Rai, 2016).

Gandhi's view of technology is a complex combination of criticism and acceptance. He realized that technology has the potential to provide great benefits to humans, but at the same time it presents a threat to basic human values. Gandhi emphasized that humans should not be slaves to technology. Instead, technology should be used to improve the quality of human life and advance society, not to replace human values. In his book "Hind Swaraj," he criticizes technological and

industrial modernization that, according to him, separates humans from their cultural and natural roots (Gandhi, 2013). Gandhi also emphasized the importance of natural resources and sustainability. He believes that the pursuit of modern technology often destroys nature and depletes resources excessively. This view, which is now increasingly relevant in the context of environmental issues, shows that Gandhi's criticism of technology has a strong basis (Kapur, 2002). Therefore, Gandhi's perspectives on technology serve as a valuable guide for integrating ethical and sustainable practices within the development of modern ICT in Indonesia.

Gandhi's critical view of technology can be understood through several key points. First, he believed that modern technology often alienates humans from their jobs, leading to dehumanization and a loss of human courage. He argued that machines replacing manual work reduced human independence and courage, viewing manual labor as an important means to achieve inner peace and moral integrity (Parel, 2006). In the context of ICT in Indonesia, the emergence of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has replaced some human jobs, especially in the manufacturing and customer service sectors. Although this technology improves efficiency, there are concerns about job losses and a lack of human involvement in the work process. To address this, the government and companies in Indonesia must ensure retraining and upskilling for workers to adapt to technological changes.

Second, Gandhi argued that the technology introduced by British colonialism had created economic dependence to the detriment of Indian society. For example, the British textile industry destroyed India's local textile industry, forcing many people to become unemployed or work in factories with poor conditions (Hardiman, 2003). Similar economic dependency and oppression can be seen in Indonesia today. Foreign digital platforms, such as e-commerce and ride-hailing services, often dominate the market, hindering the development of local businesses and strengthening economic disparities. Additionally, digital gig economy platforms sometimes exploit workers by providing low wages, long working hours, and lack of job protection. The excessive collection and use of personal data by digital platforms also raise concerns about data privacy and security.

Concrete examples of economic dependence and oppression due to technology in Indonesia include the dominance of foreign e-commerce platforms, which can hinder the development of local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Ride-hailing platforms such as Gojek and Grab have triggered protests from online motorcycle taxi drivers demanding wage increases and welfare improvements. Data breaches on digital platforms such as Tokopedia and Blibli raise concerns about the privacy and security of consumer data. To handle these issues, efforts should be made to develop local digital platforms that can compete with foreign platforms and provide opportunities for local businesses. Implementing regulations that protect the rights of digital workers, such as minimum wage, reasonable working hours, and social security, is crucial. Additionally, educating the public on the importance of data privacy and encouraging digital platforms to implement safe and responsible practices in data management is necessary. The government needs to take an active role in regulating and supervising the digital industry to ensure that technology is used for the benefit of the people and does not exacerbate economic disparities. Examples of application include government initiatives such as the "National Proud of Made in Indonesia" program, which encourages the use of local e-commerce platforms and products made in Indonesia. Trade unions can fight for the rights of digital workers, while civil society can conduct public advocacy and education on data privacy, encouraging digital platforms to implement safe and responsible practices.

Lastly, Gandhi criticized modern technology for encouraging excessive consumption and a materialistic lifestyle. He promoted a simple and independent lifestyle, emphasizing the use of handmade and locally produced items to meet basic needs (Iyer, 1993). In Indonesia, social media and

e-commerce often encourage excessive consumption through aggressive advertising and promotion. People must be wiser in their use of technology, choosing to support local products and participate in a sustainable circular economy. Gandhi's views on technology serve as a valuable guide for integrating ethical and sustainable practices within the development of modern ICT in Indonesia, ensuring that technology enhances human well-being rather than undermining it.

Gandhi also criticized the environmental impact of modern technology. He observed that industrialization often causes environmental damage and pollution, which is detrimental to ecosystems and human health (Sharma, 2008). This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of ICT in Indonesia. For example, the burning of fossil fuels to generate electricity for electronic devices and ICT infrastructure contributes to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, leading to global warming and climate change. Water pollution is another significant issue, as mining raw materials for electronic devices and improper disposal of electronic waste can contaminate groundwater and rivers, endangering both human health and ecosystems.

Electronic waste, or e-waste, presents a major environmental challenge. Uncontrolled disposal of electronic devices produces e-waste containing hazardous materials such as mercury, lead, and cadmium, which can pollute the soil and harm human health. Additionally, the production of electronic devices and ICT infrastructure requires substantial natural resources such as water, minerals, and metals, leading to depletion and environmental degradation.

Efforts to address these issues, inspired by Gandhi's views, include reducing consumption by adopting a minimalist lifestyle and avoiding unnecessary purchases of electronic devices. Extending the service life of electronic devices through repair and maintenance can also help, as can responsible e-waste recycling to prevent pollution and recover valuable materials. Supporting the development of eco-friendly technologies that are energy-efficient and use recycled materials is crucial, as is implementing policies that regulate e-waste management and promote public education on responsible ICT consumption.

For instance, the Indonesian government can create regulations requiring electronics manufacturers to be responsible for the recycling of their products and provide incentives for using recycled materials. Technology companies can design products that are easy to repair and recycle and offer recycling programs for consumers. Communities can choose energy-efficient, environmentally friendly electronic devices and recycle old devices properly.

Gandhi felt that modern technology often exacerbated social imbalances, enriching and strengthening the position of those already at the top of the social hierarchy while further marginalizing the poor and uneducated (Chatterjee, 1983). In Indonesia, technology has contributed to social imbalances in several ways. There is a significant access gap, with people in remote, rural, and poor communities often having limited or no access to the internet and other digital technologies, which hinders their progress in education, employment, and economic opportunities.

The knowledge gap is another issue, as a lack of digital literacy and ICT skills can exacerbate social disparities. Those who lack the necessary knowledge and skills to use technology effectively may be disadvantaged in various aspects of life, such as finding employment, accessing public services, and participating in the digital society. Moreover, technology can be used to exploit and marginalize certain groups, such as migrant workers, women, and people with disabilities. For example, digital platforms can spread misinformation and hate speech or exploit online workers.

To address these challenges, Indonesia must continue investing in equitable digital infrastructure development, including high-speed internet access in remote and rural areas. Digital literacy education and training programs are essential to increase public awareness of the benefits of ICT and equip people with the necessary skills to use it effectively. Developing inclusive technology that is accessible to all, including marginalized groups and people with disabilities, is crucial. Implementing

fair policies and regulations to promote equal access to ICTs and prevent exploitation and marginalization is also necessary. Engaging local communities and civil society organizations in ICT-related decision-making processes ensures that their needs and aspirations are represented.

Concrete efforts include government initiatives such as the "Palapa Ring Barat" program, which provides internet access in remote areas of Western Indonesia. Non-profit organizations can offer digital literacy and ICT skills training to marginalized communities and women in rural areas. Technology companies can develop digital applications and platforms tailored to the needs of people in rural and remote areas.

Gandhi also considered that modern technology contributed to the decline of traditional values and local culture. He worried that the adoption of Western technology would replace local practices and knowledge passed down through generations (Weber, 1996). This concern is evident in Indonesia, where the widespread use of digital technologies and social media has led to the erosion of traditional values and cultural practices. Efforts to address this issue include promoting and preserving local culture through digital platforms, integrating traditional knowledge and practices into modern technology use, and encouraging the younger generation to value and maintain their cultural heritage. By balancing technological advancement with the preservation of traditional values, Indonesia can ensure that its cultural identity remains strong while benefiting from the advantages of modern technology.

The Impact of Technology on Traditional Values in Indonesia: A Delicate Balance

The rapid advancement of technology in Indonesia has brought about a wave of opportunities and transformations, but it has also raised concerns about its potential impact on the nation's rich cultural heritage and traditional values. While technology offers immense potential for progress and innovation, it also presents challenges that could erode the very foundations of Indonesian identity.

Challenges Posed by Technology:

1. **Cultural Westernization:** The pervasive influence of Western popular culture, often disseminated through social media and online platforms, can overshadow local traditions and values, particularly among the younger generation. This cultural influx can lead to a sense of alienation and a disconnect from their cultural roots.
2. **Reduced Intergenerational Interaction:** Excessive reliance on technology can diminish face-to-face interactions within families and communities. This decline in interpersonal connections weakens the transmission of traditional values and local knowledge from elders to younger generations, potentially leading to a loss of cultural continuity.
3. **Erosion of Local Wisdom:** As dependence on modern technology increases, valuable knowledge and practices passed down through generations risk being forgotten. This erosion of local wisdom can diminish cultural richness and the unique traditions that define Indonesia's diverse communities.

Efforts to Preserve Traditional Values:

1. **Incorporating Local Culture into Education:** Educational institutions play a crucial role in safeguarding traditional values by integrating them into the curriculum. This can be achieved through incorporating performing arts, folklore studies, and visits to cultural sites, fostering a sense of cultural pride and appreciation among students.
2. **Leveraging Technology for Cultural Preservation:** Technology can be a powerful tool for preserving local culture. Mobile apps can facilitate learning regional languages, online

platforms can showcase traditional arts, and social media can spread awareness about cultural heritage, ensuring that these treasures are not lost in the digital age.

3. **Raising Cultural Awareness:** Public awareness campaigns, educational programs, seminars, workshops, and cultural festivals can all play a vital role in highlighting the importance of local culture and traditional values for Indonesians of all ages. This proactive approach ensures that these values remain at the heart of Indonesian society.
4. **Supporting Cultural Communities:** Providing resources and funding to local cultural communities empowers them to maintain and share their traditions. This support ensures the continuity of cultural practices and their transmission to future generations, preserving the rich tapestry of Indonesia's cultural heritage.
5. **Reaching Gen Z through Technology:** Leveraging the digital platforms popular with Gen Z, like social media, can be a powerful way to engage them with messages about traditional cultures and values, ensuring their continued relevance and appreciation among the younger generation.

Examples in Action:

- **Government Initiatives:** The Ministry of Education and Culture's "2023 Cultural Smart Competition" exemplifies government efforts to spark student interest in local culture through engaging activities.
- **NGO Involvement:** Non-governmental organizations like the "Nusantara Cultural House" actively preserve and promote local culture through art performances, workshops, and exhibitions, demonstrating the power of community-driven initiatives.
- **Community Engagement:** Local cultural communities utilizing social media to share information about their traditions offer a grassroots approach to cultural preservation, ensuring that these traditions remain alive and vibrant within their communities.

Gandhi's Alternatives: Swadeshi and Satyagraha

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas offer an alternative perspective on technology. His concepts of Swadeshi and Satyagraha can be applied to the Indonesian context, providing a framework for navigating the digital age while upholding traditional values:

- **Swadeshi:** This philosophy emphasizes economic self-reliance by using locally-made goods and supporting domestic industries. In the digital age, Swadeshi translates to supporting Indonesian tech startups and companies, developing locally relevant digital products and services, fostering innovation and economic independence.
- **Satyagraha:** This principle of non-violence and rejecting injustice extends to the ethical use of technology. It encourages fighting the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, and the exploitation of personal data, ensuring that technology is used for the benefit of society, not to harm or exploit.

Swadeshi in the Digital Age:

- **Support Local Products:** Choosing Indonesian-made digital products strengthens local economies, promotes innovation, and contributes to technological self-reliance.
- **Develop Local Technology:** Investing in research and development of technology that addresses Indonesia's specific needs and fosters digital independence ensures that technological advancements are aligned with the nation's priorities.

- Leveraging Open Source: Utilizing free and open-source software reduces reliance on foreign commercial platforms and promotes digital sovereignty, empowering Indonesia to shape its own technological landscape.
- Sharing Knowledge and Skills: Organizing workshops and training programs can equip local communities with the digital literacy skills needed to thrive in the digital age, bridging the digital divide and ensuring that everyone can benefit from technological advancements.

Satyagraha in the Digital Era:

Fighting Negative Content: Combating hate speech, cyberbullying, and misinformation through social media campaigns

Gandhi's Views on Technology: Balancing Progress with Humanity in Indonesia's Digital Age

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on technology, though born in a different era, offer valuable insights for Indonesia's journey in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) age. While some might dismiss his concerns as outdated, a closer look reveals a call for responsible development that considers both the benefits and drawbacks of technology.

- Strengths and Limitations of Technological Advancements

Gandhi recognized the potential of technology to improve lives. He wouldn't argue against advancements that address issues like poverty, hunger, and disease. However, he also cautioned against overlooking the negative aspects. Unbridled technological progress can lead to human exploitation, environmental damage, and exacerbate social inequalities.

- The Human Cost of Progress

One of Gandhi's core concerns was the potential for technology to dehumanize society. He envisioned a future where human interaction and values could be replaced by reliance on machines. This highlights the importance of striking a balance – ensuring technology serves humanity, not the other way around.

- Finding Harmony in the Digital Age

Gandhi's message resonates strongly with the challenges and opportunities presented by ICT in Indonesia.

Here's how his ideas can be applied:

- Double-Edged Sword: The Power and Peril of ICT
ICT offers immense potential. It can bridge the digital divide by providing access to information, education, and public services. However, it can also create new divides, leaving some behind. Unethical data collection, cyberbullying, and community polarization are real threats that need to be addressed.
- Ethics and Responsibility: Guiding Principles for ICT Development
Just like any powerful tool, ICT demands responsible use. This means prioritizing human values, ethics, and democratic principles when developing and deploying technology. Collaboration between governments, businesses, academics, and civil society is crucial to ensure responsible use of ICT for the greater good.
- Humanity at the Core: Designing Technology for Us
Technology should enhance human interaction, not replace it. This means designing technology with a human-centered approach, keeping social and cultural contexts in mind. Only then can we achieve inclusive and sustainable progress.

Examples in Action: Bridging the Gap Between Ideas and Reality

- The Indonesian government prioritizing ICT infrastructure development in rural areas can bridge the digital divide and empower communities.
- The private sector focusing on environmentally friendly and ethical technologies ensures responsible innovation.
- Civil society actively promoting digital literacy and responsible ICT use fosters a more aware and empowered populace.

Gandhi's Legacy: A Call for Continuous Reflection

Gandhi's views on technology provide a framework for navigating the complex landscape of ICT development in Indonesia. By prioritizing balance, ethics, and human values, we can harness the power of technology for the betterment of society and the environment.

A Look Ahead: Adapting to the Evolving Technological Landscape

While Gandhi's ideas are relevant, they were formed during the early stages of modern technology. The rise of artificial intelligence, robotics, and sophisticated automation presents new challenges. We must adapt his critical perspective to these complex technologies. His emphasis on ethical considerations serves as a reminder to critically evaluate how we use technology, ensuring it benefits everyone and minimizes negative impacts.

In conclusion, Gandhi's views on technology serve as a timeless call for responsible innovation. By embracing his principles and adapting them to the ever-evolving digital world, Indonesia can harness the power of ICT to achieve a future that is both technologically advanced and deeply human.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mahatma Gandhi's views on technology are subjects that continue to be relevant in this modern world. This view reminds us of the importance of considering the impact of technology on society, the environment, and human values. In undergoing the current technological revolution, we must adhere to the principles of ethics and sustainability, maintain a balance between technological development and humanity, and ensure that technology is used to improve the quality of life of everyone, not just the lucky few.

Some important points that are noted from Gandhi's view:

- Technological advances are not always positive: Gandhi saw that some aspects of technology can have negative impacts, such as human exploitation, environmental damage, and social inequality.
- Concerns about dehumanization: Gandhi was concerned about the possibility of technology replacing human interaction and human values.
- The importance of balance: Gandhi did not reject technology as a whole, but he emphasized the importance of a balance between technological advancement and human values.

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