

**MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS MANIFESTED BY THE MAIN  
CHARACTER IN THE *FORREST GUMP* THE MOVIE**

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# **MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS MANIFESTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTER IN THE *FORREST GUMP* THE MOVIE**

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## **I. Abstract**

A film is one of literary works. American film has long been popular with recreating American history. *Forrest Gump* movie is chosen to be analyzed in this thesis because it shows the reality and the western historical themes. To support the analysis of the main character, some theories of the Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslows are utilized to get better understanding about the main character. Since the object of the study is a movie, the researcher also use the movie studies. The formulated research problem is on Maslow's hierarchy of needs manifested by the main character in *Forrest Gump* the movie.

The result of this study shows that the Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow is manifested by *Forrest Gump*, the main character in this movie. Little *Forrest* cannot walk properly without braces in his legs, but miraculously he can walk and even run. This kind of way for being secure, from being bullied, brought him to reach all the impossible things that people think he cannot do. The satisfaction for being loved and belonging with his closest people taught him to face his own destiny. Being rich, famous and having a medal of honor, actually, he did not meant to do it. It is just all about caring, protecting and keeping the people around for being safe and having a comfortable live. Finally, he thought that maybe each people have their own destiny or just live floating around accidental-like on a breeze. At the last, *Forrest* has his destiny as a "godzilionaire", a good friend, lovely husband, and a great man as a son and a father.

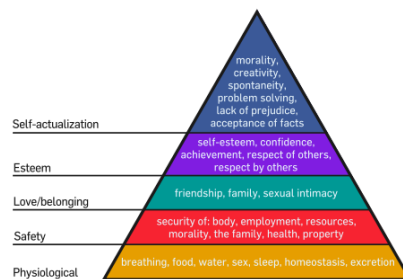
The other researchers need to do further studies and carry out other pieces of analysis reveal to the important and useful things in *Forrest Gump* the movie. The second possibility is the next researchers may keep using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but they can have different object to analyze or they can use the same movie but different approach.

Keywords: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization, Forrest Gump, Forrest Gump The Movie.

## II. Review of Related Literature

### a. Hierarchy of Needs

Human being will never be satisfied with his or her needs. Maslow describes that man is a living creature that will never be satisfied fully with his or her life, one need has been satisfied and other needs will occur (1970). In other words, "fundamental needs must be satisfied before an individual is free to progress from psychological needs, and these in turn must be met before the person can realize self-actualization needs. Maslow (1970) said that there are five primary levels on the ladder of human needs.



**Figure 2.1 The Pyramid of the Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow**

It can be clarified from the Figure 2.1 about the pyramid of the Hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow that represents the steps for being self-actualized person. As the picture shown, the very bottom part is the basic needs of the human being. If the person has fulfilled some of the needs at the first step, then they can go on to the next step. While they are trying to fulfill the second step, unconsciously they have finished the first step. That is how the people go for the further steps and being self-actualized.

### **1. Physiological needs**

The lowest level of needs may be called *physiological* needs. These are needs of the body as a physiological system. They consist of the need to breathe air, hunger, thirst, avoidance of extreme heat and cold, etc. This is the fundamental needs are the most important thing for human to live in the world before an individual is free to progress to upper level. The major effects from the satisfaction of psychological needs nominate the behavior of individuals.

### **2. Safety Needs**

When individuals' physiological needs have been satisfied, it will raise another need that dominates and governs individual dealing with need for self-security. This need is considered as motivation to feel peace, secure, safe, and out of danger from his or her environment. Maslow (1970) stated that that "need for self-security is very obvious and this need is an innate reflex, learning process, or the influence of individuals' experience. Thus, from this explanation, the individuals will be able to neutralize and anticipate any treat for themselves.

Basically security needs are the needs for being free from anxiety of physical danger and being taken away from their basic psychological needs. As the result, when the needs of physiological and safety are satisfied, then will gain the higher level of needs, the need for *love and belonging*.

### **3. Need for Love and Belonging**

Social needs are dominant for individuals in striving for meaningful relation with other for the sake of happiness. This is the basic social or affiliation motive, which drives people to seek contact with others and to build satisfying relations with them.

To be a human being, somebody must have other people around them. Maslow (1970) explained that people have an innate need for affection and love that can be satisfied only by other people. Thus, individuals must affiliate with others, and identify himself or herself with one or more like-minded

individuals. When he or she identify with someone else, they learn to perceive part of the world as that person presumable does.

#### **4. Need for Self-Esteem**

Satisfaction of love and belongingness needs triggers the emergence of the *esteem* need. In this stage of need gratification, persons also want to be esteemed, by the people they are in contact with, as well as by themselves: they want to know that they are capable of achievement and success. Maslow classifies need for self-esteem into two categories. First, it is internal respond against them dealing with getting competence, self confident, adequacy, autonomy, and freedom. Thus, individuals are sure that they have self-esteem and are able to cope with obstacles in life. Second is achievement. In this case, individuals need appreciations over what they to do.

Individuals will feel confident, forceful, capable, and valuable, if need for self-esteem is satisfied. On the contrary, individuals will feel frustrated and upset, if this need is not satisfied. The result of it has a strong effect on individual development in facing his coming life, for they feel inferior, weak, worthless, and hopeless to accept a real life. They feel pessimistic with other people.

#### **5. Need for Self-Actualization**

Self-actualization is reached when all needs are fulfilled, in particular the highest need. Self-actualization is not a fixed state, but a process of development which does not end. Self-actualization signifies that these potentialities of the self are made actual, are *actualized* in a continuing process of unfolding.

According to Maslow (1970) clarifies that it is not easy to reach self-actualization degree and to fulfill this need, for there are a number of troubles that must be passed through:

First, it is internal trouble dealing with misunderstanding, doubt, and even individuals' fear feeling to express their own potential. Further, the challenge of need for self-actualization comes from external or society.

Society has a tendency to personalize individuals' condition like character, talent, and potential. On the other hand, society has a cultural stereotype about how an individual is called "Gentlemen" or "not". The last trouble over self-actualization is negative effect from self-security. Individual development process needs responsible to take a risk, make a mistake and get a rid of unconstructive habit. As a result, the achievement of self-actualization needs only a conducive environment, but also contemporaneous individuals' experience.

Maslow (1970) stated that there are some characteristics of individuals who are able to do self-actualization. Here are some characteristics according to Cherry (2010):

*5.1 Acceptance of self, others, and nature.*

*5.2 Problem-centeredness.*

*5.3 Spontaneity.*

*5.4 Need for privacy.*

*5.5 Creativeness.*

*5.6 Peak experiences.*

*5.7 Democratic values and attitudes.*

#### **b. The Wisefool Concept**

Wisefool seems a word that has two different main word with different meaning, there is wise and fool. However, Phan (2001) state that wise fool is different from the other kinds of the mental deficiency, it is believed as a source of knowledge that more like the supernatural person who inspired wisdom better than accumulate information through formal education. Moreover, it is necessary to differentiate fools who are born to be a fool as the natural destiny, from the fools who influence the foolishness for being free from the punishment of what they would do.

It is agreed that foolishness is contradictive with being wise, but their wise is not something earned and learned but something emerged and rewarded. Furthermore, foolish wise is seen as a gift of knowledge, fast respond for doing

something without fully understanding why, and their ability to understand something secret in a very clear way.

**c. Movie Studies**

Films help to shape the thinking of millions film viewer. Films (movies, motion pictures) are a type of communication which uses moving pictures and sound to tell stories or help people to learn about new ideas. There are important cinematic elements that cannot be disregarded, since they are orchestrated to amplify the thoughts and emotions that actors convey to the audience. The writer focuses, in this thesis, on Mise-En-Scène elements to analysis the film.

By analyzing with Mise-En-Scène, it can be dig up the idea of the film. In Mise-En-Scène, camera shot is an important element. Sergei Eisenstein (1949) isolated a “basic” unit of movie and called it the “shot”. It is not defined systemically but described merely as the smallest unit of movie that the moviemaker uses. The camera placement is divided into four major section, they are center, top, bottom, and sides (Giannetti, 2002, p. 49). This camera placement is divided into six basic categories. They are extreme long shot, long shot, full shot, medium shot, close-up, and extreme close-up shot (Giannetti, 2002, p. 52).

**d. The Synopsis of *Forrest Gump* Movie**

Adapted from the novel by Winston Groom, *Forrest Gump* was written by Eric Roth and stars Tom Hanks in the title role. It explores the life saga of a simple man, Forrest Gump, who has an IQ of 75 and goes through life changing the world without even knowing it. The movie chronicles the different generations of growing up in America. Forrest is born in the small town rural south in the 50s and goes to Vietnam in the 60s; comes back and wanders through the protest movements of the late 60s-early 70s; becomes a rich entrepreneur in the 80s and after a self searching in 90s run across America, finally settles down with the love of his life.

**e. Previous Studies**

The theoretical discussion above is supported by the empirical works or studies done by Arvin Raharja (2011) entitled *The Change of Libidinal Investment to Self-Actualization Foind In Michael berg Character in “The Reader” Film.*

Therefore he focuses on revealing the change of libidinal investment into self actualization of Michael Berg. He does not focus on the steps of hierarchy of needs theory by Abraham Maslow, because in *The Reader* the steps of hierarchy of needs do not work properly. It is because there is a jump needs which is started with safely needs.

That thesis and the writer's thesis have some differences. The writer focuses on how the main character fullfilling the steps of hierarchy of need. Here, the researcher reveals the steps by showing how the main character fullfilling his basic needs by having the relationship with his society. After fullfiling the steps, the main character can be catagorized as the Self-Actualized person.

It is also supported by the thesis done by Hapsari Dian Sylvatri (2011), *Self Actualization of Andrea Sachs in The Devil Wears Prada Movie*. This writing also focuses on the hierarchy of needs steps but it has different object from which is chosen by the writer.

### **III. Objective of The Study**

From the problem of the study written above, the objective of this study is to analyze on Maslow's hierarchy of needs manifested by the main character in *Forrest Gump* the movie.

### **IV. Finding and Discussion**

#### **a. Forest Gump's Background**

Forrest Gump was born in Alabama and lives with his mother, Mrs. Gump. They both live in an old house in Greenbow, a house of his mother's family.

Forrest Gump is known as a child with low IQ and many people say that he is stupid. Since childhood he was rejected by the some people who mock at him. So that he only spoke to his mother. Because of it, it is hard for him to make a friend with someone and to through his time he tends to be quite and thoughtful. He also has a problem with his body. His back is crooked like a



question mark and it forces him to be fitted with an orthopedic shoes and metal leg braces. These things are going to make him as straight as an arrow.

Mrs. Gump has her own way to encourage his son, Forrest Gump. This situation makes Forrest always trust her and does what has been said by her. Forrest always in line with his mother, but even though he lives with his mother and almost just talk with her, in his first day school Forrest success making friend with a girl, Jenny. Because of his habitually, Forrest just be a friend with Jenny.

Forrest's journey of friendship does not always run smooth. He is hated by some of his friends. This condition makes Forrest heckled and thrown with stones on several occasions. Forrest fear and starts running to avoid his friends. But, because of this experience, Forrest becomes interested to continue running wherever he goes. He himself does not find the exact reason why he likes to run. He just wants to run. This new hobby finally brings him to the long journey that is never thought before.

#### **b. Physiological Needs**

Forrest's basic needs required is his dependence on orthopedic shoes that support him in walking. Because of it, he is able to walk and help his body straight. As a responsible mother who always loves her son, Mrs. Gump brings the poor Forrest to see a doctor to be like children in general.

The doctor made him use orthopedic shoes. The braces help him to walk and keep straight. And when he tries to walk with them at the first time, he falls down. However, during the time Forrest can master the steps and getting used to walk using braces.

To complement the needs of his leg with braces, Forrest also needs food and drinks for his body. This movie does not show specifically how the needs of food and drinks required by Forrest. But there is some meaning on it in several scenes.

Forrest's physiological needs are not too prominent in this film, although this requirement is necessary to continue his life as a human being. Forrest Gump is a pure man who receives everything literary and he does he wants. He almost

does not care about his physiological needs which are already fulfilled as shown by his physical growth in the movie.

**c. Safety Needs**

Forrest had a sense of security since he was a child from his mother. His mother always wants to protect Forrest, because she is the closest person in Forrest's life. When he was a child, he was despised by some friends. From the social environment itself Forrest need a safety. Jenny, the only friend of Forrest since his first ride to school who care on him, yell at him to run so he can safe from his friends who threw stones to him.

The experience in his childhood with some friends makes Forrest love something he never thought before, running. Forrest loves running and always runs wherever he wants. In the first, run is a way to escape his friends' persecution, but the more mature running becomes a habit.

Forrest's new hobby brings him to the football contest. From here, he becomes one of football players who have been invited to the White House to meet the President for several times and get an award. This is the path that is never considered by his family, but he agrees to go to university because he only needs to run. Forrest get the scholarship to the Alabama University and play for its football club. This becomes his destiny, being a famous football player.

Besides his running ability to avoid the danger, Forrest decided to join the Army after he graduated from the University of Alabama. Forrest feels comfortable and safe in the Army because he only does what he was told to and his duty is completing the task.

Then, when he was abandoned by Jenny for the last time, he chooses to run around the United States. He does not know how he feels, but the reason that he has is he wants to run until he feels tired. His running is the way to forget what is happening to him and to find a peace and safety feeling in him.

**d. Needs for Love and Belonging**

It is clearly shown in the movie about Forrest Gump with his mother's proximity. But in order to fulfill the needs of love and belonging, this analysis

highlights Forrest's relationship with the people around him. In his childhood, Forrest has Jenny as his only friend. During his life, this film shows only a few people who interact with him. In building the interaction, Forrest needs a process in reaching these needs (love and belonging). When he joins the Army, he makes Bubba, a new friend, as his best friend. Although in some conversation with Bubba Forrest seldom provide meaningful responses, but Bubba is very meaningful in his life. Then, his relationship with the Army Lieutenant, Dan Taylor becomes better after the Vietnam War.

**e. Need for Self-Esteem**

Forrest Gump basically does everything with his own principle of what is considered to do. He has no wide knowledge and his IQ is below the standard make Forrest thinks only with his Id. But in his life, Forrest gets much better impression from his social environment.

The first thing is he becomes a football athlete of Alabama and in the end of his journey as football athlete, he is graduated from a college and gets award from President Kennedy. The second is when he gets a medal of honor from President Johnson because of his service in saving the Army in Vietnam War. This is the second time he visits the White House to receive the medal. Then, he becomes a ping-pong player and the Army decides him to be on the All-America Ping-Pong Team. His highest achievement is playing ping-pong against China. So that is the first time All-America visits China. Some people consider Forrest is the national celebrity. Because of that, Forrest also gets a plaque from President Nixon.

When his service for Army is up, he decides to continue Bubba's dream to be a shrimp boat captain. Bubba's words are like a command for him that he has to be a captain and be a successful entrepreneur. And that is what he does. Because he is successful, he starts to share his money to the Baptist church and make a Gump Medical Center Bayou La Batre in Alabama.

What Forrest achieved is actually never be planned by him nor his family. He himself just follows where the wind brings him and does his duty and

assignment with the best. Anything he gets is prove that he does everything with earnestly and use his heart. He does not care when people say he is stupid. It proves that everything will end in maximum result if it is done correctly.

**f. Need for Self-Actualization**

The highest self-actualization that is made by Forrest is he convinces his closest people about their destiny. Forrest never knows and plans his own destiny because he only uses his id as a human until the day his mother passed away. His mother underwent her fate as a single parent for Forrest and completes all the needs of her small family. With the intelligence she has, she is able to manage the family financial so they are not lack of money. The other thing suffered by Bubba. He has long aspired to be a shrimp boat captain. He plans anything if he becomes a captain one day. He teaches anything about shrimp to Forrest. But the fate says he has to die in battlefield even though Forrest tries to save him. Bubba cannot make his dream comes true. Contrary to Bubba, Dan Taylor wants himself to be killed in Vietnam, die with honor in the battlefield. But Forrest saves him and makes him live with the pain. It makes him hates Forrest and thinks Forrest does the big mistake. But his encountering with Forrest brings him to the natural destiny that is to be an entrepreneur after being Forrest's co-worker in Bubba-Gump Shrimp.

The process above makes Forrest being self-actualized person. It is because a self-actualized person has categorizes which is shown by Forrest:

**1. Acceptance of self, others, and nature.** They sees human nature as is, has a lack of crippling guilt or shame, enjoys himself without regret or apology, and has no unnecessary inhibitions.

Forrest stated his feeling for being a gardener in the University of Alabama. Although he got a big shrimpin' company, he did not being ashamed, moreover he just did the cutting-grass job without get any salary.

The people with this character are not, however, self-satisfied, but are concerned about discrepancies what is and what might be and should be in themselves, others, and society.

2. **Peak experiences.** Individuals who are Self-Actualized often have what Maslow termed as the *peak experiences*. Forrest is just all alone after his mother's dead and being abandoned by Jenny. This is the experience of the loss of placement in time and space with two most important women in his life. That is the exact time he decides to run without any destination.

He finally realized that he run for put his past for being all alone behind. Again, this thought did not come from he himself, he just remembered what his mother said and did it. Then right after he decided to move on, he got a letter from Jenny, the lady that he wanted to marry with.

Forrest felt guilty and frightened, then Jenny calm him down and told him that he did not do anything wrong and stated that little Forrest is one of the smartest kids in the class. This moment is one of the peak experiences that made him lost the *neurotic symptom* or anxiety for being low IQ-ed person. Here he started to receive his destiny for being a good husband for Jenny and the best father for little Forrest.

3. **Democratic values and attitudes.** The Self-Actualized person is able to learn from anyone, is humble and friendly with anyone regardless of class, education, political belief, race or color.



(a)

(b)

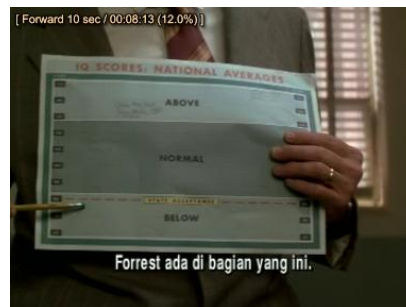
**Figure 3.17 Forrest sitting in the bus stop with some people**

Forrest makes friend with anybody. He is a really humble and friendly to the people around him. Figure 3.17 (a) and (b) portrays the social relationship of Forrest which can be taken by a full shot. He has some nice talk with some different people in the bus stop and telling them his story. He did not pay any

attention to gender, status and color. He just talks to them even some of them did not really care or belief of the story. In another time, he also has a black friend in the Army, Bubba. He also helps the other soldiers in the battle field no matter who they are. This kind of relationship is firstly shown by Mrs. Gump, Forrest's mother. She has Ms. Louise, a black lady, as her company in take care her big Gump house. Forrest just applying like his mother does.

#### g. Self-Actualized Wisefool

After discussing the steps of Forrest Gump for being self-actualized, we should go back to the story of Forrest Gump itself. From the beginning of the story, which narrated by Forrest himself, shows the situation of Forrest Gump physically and mentally. The film clearly describe the disability of little Forrest who cannot use his feet that caused by his back was like a question mark. From the story, also, we can get the other description of Forrest condition.



**Figure 3.18 Forrest IQ chart**

According to IQ Tester, IQ values between 71 to 80 means a lower level of mental retardation. Individuals with these values graduate primary school with difficulties but are successful in special schools ([www.ie.iqtester.eu](http://www.ie.iqtester.eu)). Figure 3.18 shows the IQ chart which is shown by the principle in the school. It is a close up scene exposing the pencil which points at the Forrest's point which is under the normal range. This really states that he can be categorized a fool.

The foolishness of Forrest is always asked by some people including Jenny. The people ask him if he is stupid or something, but Forrest easily answered with what his mother said about stupid is the stupid does. It is a kind of

defense that his mother told him. And this is another prove that he is wise enough to be able to answer what people stated to him.

As clearly explained above, Forrest is not a normal person who has normal IQ but he is self-actualized. Many people doubt his successfulness but he has proved and tackles what people think about him. He has his destiny as a “godzilionaire”, a good friend, lovely husband, and a great man as a son and a father.

## **V. Conclusion and Suggestion**

### **a. Conclusion**

To be self-actualized, as one of human basic needs, is something that humans want to achieve. To reach this final need, people have to fulfill the four-first needs first. *Forrest Gump* the movie provides the process of self actualization of the main character named Forrest Gump and those steps direct the writer to show that the main character is the wise fool one.

First, Forrest has been fulfilled all his basic needs. Forrest basic needs required is his dependence on orthopedic shoes that support him in walking. But after the “miracle-happens”, he is able to walk. Furthermore, he can run and his ability to run fast has brought his life for being self-actualized although only with low IQ.

Forrest’s second and third basic needs have been easier to fulfill after getting the normal body. Whenever he got in trouble, he followed what Jenny said and just run, like what he did in the battle field while he joining the army. That is how he passed his safety need. And of course as we have already know, he got some really good friends as the closest person beside his mother and Jenny. He has Bubba and Lieutenant Dan Taylor as his partner in the army, as a friend who always got their back and a good commander. They also have a really good partnership in the shrimping company. Bubba as the one who had the dream for being a shrimping boat captain has told Forrest whatever takes for being super good in catches the shrimp. He got a backup from Lieutenant Dan when Forrest

already became a shrimping boat captain and take care the Bubba-Gump Shrimp Corporation.

The esteem needs just follow the first-three needs before. His hidden ability has made him invited to the White House and meets the President of the United States then got some achievements.

Being a self-actualized person, Forrest already has some of the character of self-actualized person. He has the acceptance of self, others, and nature. He already passed the peak experiences in his life. And his democratic values and attitude especially towards other people were already done since he was just a kid. Forrest is a self-actualized wise fool. His limitation does not really limit him to fulfill his basic needs as a human. He is the wise fool man which has success in facing his destiny.

#### **b. Suggestion**

*Forrest Gump* the movie still offers many literary aspects that are not explored yet. Therefore, it is suggested for the next researchers to analyze other aspects that arise in the movie. Next, others researchers may keep using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but they can have different object to analyze or they can use the same movie but different approach to get the findings so they can have a further research on this personality theory.

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