

## Hierarchy of Needs of the Main Character in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*: A Study of Abraham Maslow's Psychology

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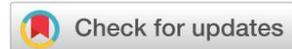
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### ABSTRACT

*This research discusses the psychological needs of the main character in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy using Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. The main focus of the research lies on five levels of needs: physiological, security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization. Through descriptive qualitative method and humanistic psychology approach, this research explores how Fahri's character articulates and meets his needs. The results show that Fahri successfully fulfills each stage of need step-by-step, starting with basic necessities and culminating in self-actualization, evident in his intellectual, spiritual, and moral development. The findings reveal that Fahri's character is a representation of an individual who has successfully reached the stage of self-actualization, and is able to contribute to his social environment through knowledge and faith.*

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### 1. Introduction

Literature is an expression of a person's feelings and thoughts expressed in the form of writing or stories, which are arranged in an interesting way so that readers can enjoy them (Faidah, 2018; Nuesaadah et al., 2025; Sendana et al., 2025; Abbas et al., 2023). In the view of Hamsiah et al. (2023) Literature grows as an imaginative expression of humans in using language to convey their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the world. Literature is not only a means of self-expression and entertainment, but also plays a significant role in reflecting social reality in society (Mahdori et al., 2025; Junaid & Andini, 2025; Suheri et al., 2025). As explained by Alandira et al. (2025), literary works as part of cultural products serve to present various social, cultural and political dynamics that occur in human life. Furthermore, in the view of Setiawati & Rohanda (2020), literary works have a close attachment to human life, so their existence cannot be separated from human reality and experience itself. One of the most popular forms of literary works is the novel. Novels as long prose works are able to describe the dynamics of the characters' lives in detail, including psychological, social, and spiritual aspects (Asha et al., 2025; Kyeongjae et al., 2025; Junaid et al., 2025).

A novel is a form of narrative fiction that presents a story with a complex structure, including elements of plot, setting, character, and theme. Nurgiyantoro (2018) states that novels are literary works that describe the problems of human life in a complicated social context, by telling the development of character characters in depth. Through the presence of the characters, readers are invited to explore human values, internal conflicts, and the characters' efforts to fulfill their needs. In line with this, Pramudya et al. (2024) emphasize that a novel is able to reveal every layer of human life in more detail, freely, and deeply, and presents complex problems, which often reflect the reality of life faced by individuals and society.

The novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy is one of Indonesia's popular literary works that has attracted public attention because of its success in raising issues of love, religiosity, and the diaspora life of Indonesian students in Egypt (Yuniarto, 2020). The main character in this novel, Fahri bin Abdillah, is portrayed as a pious person, crdas, and full of integrity. The complexity of Fahri's character who lives under social, cultural, and spiritual pressures makes him interesting to analyze from the perspective of personality psychology, especially through Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory organizes human needs into five levels, starting from physiological needs, security, love and belonging, self-esteem, to self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Maslow argues that the fulfillment of human needs takes place in stages, and individuals will not seek to fulfill higher-level needs before their basic needs are met. In a literary context, this theory can be applied to analyze the motivations for characters' behavior and the inner dynamics that influence their life choices (Fest et al., 2021).

For example, in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* there is a quote that reflects how the main character, Fahri, has full awareness of his life responsibilities as a student and servant of God. This awareness reflects that he has reached the stage of self-actualization in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, which is the highest stage when a person tries to realize his best potential. The quote reads:

*"Kalau tidak ingat, bahwa keberadaanku di kota seribu menara ini adalah amanat. Dan amanat akan dipertanggungjawabkan dengan pasti. Kalau tak ingat, bahwa masa muda yang sedang aku jalani ini akan dipertanyakan kelak. Kalau tak ingat, bahwa tidak semua orang diberi nikmat belajar di bumi para nabi ini. (El Shirazy, 2004. p 6).*

*"If you don't remember, that my existence in this city of a thousand towers is a mandate. And the mandate will be accounted for with certainty. If I don't remember, that the youth that I am living will be questioned later. If I don't remember that not everyone is given the favor of studying in the land of the prophets..." (El Shirazy, 2004. p 6).*

This quote reflects that Fahri has a life orientation that is not only individual, but also transcendental. His awareness of the mandate and the opportunity to study in a holy place shows that he is not trapped in fulfilling physical or social needs. Instead, he makes his intellectual and spiritual journey a means to form a higher meaning of life. In the context of Maslow's theory, this indicates that Fahri's character has gone beyond basic and social needs and entered the stage of self-actualization, which is when individuals pursue existential perfection with noble values that they believe in. The awareness of responsibility and devotion makes this character not only develop psychologically, but also spiritually and morally.

Some Previous studies on the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* have mostly highlighted the moral and social aspects of the characters. Harpriyanti et al. (2022) showed that Fahri's character displays responsibility, patience, and determination in facing his trials, but in-depth studies of the main character's psychological needs are still limited. Oemiati et al. (2024) addressed this gap by examining the psychological needs of Fahri's character using a humanistic psychology approach to understand the motivation and inner conflict of the main character in facing the challenges of idealism and reality. In addition, Juidah (2017) conducted a structural semiotic analysis to examine symbols and meanings in the novel that strengthen the understanding of the inner struggle and social conflict of the main character. Furthermore, Derak (2024) underlined the aspects of human nature and the spiritual quest in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2*, emphasizing the complex internal dynamics in character development that are closely related to human values and religiosity.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze Fahri's main character in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 1* using Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs approach. This analysis will show how the basic needs to the level of self-actualization are reflected in Fahri's actions and attitudes throughout the story. This approach is expected to provide a new understanding of Fahri's character not only as a religious figure, but also as an individual who struggles with his human needs in a multicultural and challenging environment.

## 2. Literature Review

The hierarchy of needs theory is one of the main approaches in humanistic psychology developed by Abraham H. Maslow. In his monumental article *A Theory of Human Motivation*, Maslow (1943) stated that human behavior is driven by a hierarchically arranged set of needs, starting from the most basic needs to the stage of self-actualization. The five levels of needs include: physiological needs, needs for security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization. Maslow emphasized that these needs are not rigid, but generally a person will not try to meet upper-level needs if basic needs have not been met. This theory is then widely applied in various fields, including in literary studies to examine the motivational structure and psychological dynamics of characters in stories (Goble, 1970).

### a. Physiological Needs

Physiological needs occupy the most basic position in Maslow's hierarchy. These needs include essential biological elements such as eating, drinking, and sleeping, all of which are basic requirements for survival. When these needs are not met, all the energy and attention of the individual will be concentrated on efforts to fulfill them (Maslow, 1943). Maslow

(1943 p. 375) states: "A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else."

Goble (1970) emphasized that the fulfillment of physiological needs is a condition for higher needs to function. If a person is hungry or exhausted to the extreme, then reflection on the value of life or spiritual purpose will become vague and irrelevant.

#### b. Safety Needs

After physiological needs are met, a person will seek to obtain security and stability in their life. These needs include security from physical threats, economic protection, and stability in daily life (Maslow, 1943). In novels, this need can be depicted through the character's desire for a decent place to live, a supportive environment, or protection from external disturbances. Kenrick et al. (2010) added that security is also closely related to long-term survival and the certainty of a stable environment.

#### c. Love and Belongingness Needs

At the next stage, individuals are driven to establish relationships that are full of warmth and emotional attachment. These needs include feeling loved, belonging to a group, and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Maslow, 1943). When these needs are not met, individuals are vulnerable to experiencing alienation, loneliness, or depression.

#### d. Esteem Needs

This need includes two aspects: esteem from others (such as recognition, status, achievement), and self-esteem (such as self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment). Maslow (1943 p. 382) states: "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, and capability."

Feldman (2011) notes that esteem is a decisive factor in psychological development, as it allows individuals to feel meaningful and contributing. In a social context, recognition from others can be a motivational driver to maintain prosocial and productive behaviors. Meanwhile, Crain (2015) linked self-esteem to healthy identity formation. He mentioned that adolescents and young adults who do not receive social validation tend to form a fragile and unstable self-image. If this need is met, one will feel valued and confident. In literature, characters who strive for achievement or recognition are usually at this stage. Conversely, if they fail, the character will feel inferior and worthless.

#### e. Self-Actualization Needs

This is the highest level in the hierarchy of needs. Individuals will be driven to realize their full potential, achieve meaningful life goals, and do what they truly believe in. In literature, characters who live dedicated lives, act on high moral principles, or pursue lofty ideals, are usually in the self-actualization phase. Maslow mentions that only a few people reach this stage fully (Maslow, 1943). Rogers (1995), another humanistic psychologist, calls self-actualization the innate drive in humans to grow and develop authentically. Actualized people usually have high moral integrity, empathy, and openness to life experiences. Frankl (2017) even connects it with the search for existential meaning. According to him, humans will only feel whole if they are able to find a higher purpose in life than just self-gratification, such as service, devotion, or spirituality.

The application of this theory in literary analysis, especially of the main character in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, allows readers and researchers to understand the psychological development of the character gradually. The character of Fahri, who lives as a student at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt with various social, spiritual, and emotional dynamics, can be analyzed how he fulfills his life needs from the most basic level to self-actualization. This approach not only describes the character as a whole, but also places him as a complex human being who develops according to the pressures and motivations he experiences.

### 3. Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a humanistic psychological approach to analyze the psychological needs of the main character in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy. This method aims to understand the meaning and inner motivation of characters through narrative descriptions in literary texts. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to capture phenomena in depth in a natural context (Moleong, 2007). Qualitative descriptive research is also used to systematically describe social and psychological symptoms of characters through word-based data, not numbers (Sugiyono, 2007). The humanistic psychological approach in this study uses Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, which divides human needs into five levels, ranging from physiological

needs to self-actualization. This theory is applied to understand Fahri's personality development in facing social and spiritual pressures. Humanistic psychology focuses on positive human potential, the drive for self-actualization, and the freedom to choose the direction of life (Mulyadi et al., 2015). In literary studies, the psychological approach is used to explore the character's motivations, inner dynamics, and psychological conflicts that are reflected through the behavior and narrative of the story (Ratna, 2022).

The main data source in this research is the first edition of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, published by Republika in 2004. The data collection technique is done through literature study, which is reading and analyzing the text intensively to find quotations that reflect the symptoms of the character's needs. A literature study is employed to obtain information from primary and secondary sources relevant to the object of study (Arikunto, 2010). This technique enables researchers to gather supporting theories and compare the results of the analysis with previous research (Bungin, 2007). The data analysis technique used in this research is thematic content analysis. This technique aims to examine the meaning of quotations in the text that show the five categories of needs according to Maslow: physiological, security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization. Content analysis is a way to identify and interpret hidden or explicit messages in literary texts (Rohanda, 2016). The analysis was conducted in four main stages, namely: (1) reading the text thoroughly to understand the context of the story; (2) identifying parts that reflect the psychological needs of the characters; (3) categorizing the data based on Maslow's categories of needs; and (4) compiling interpretations based on the relationship between theory and data findings (Ratna, 2022).

Through these stages, researchers can construct a complete understanding of the character's inner dynamics in a systematic and directed manner. This approach also provides space for in-depth interpretation of the motivational structure and the process of fulfilling psychological needs in literary narratives. Thus, this research seeks to reveal how the complexity of the main character is reflected through the process of fulfilling Maslow's five levels of needs, which ultimately represents the development of the character's personality in the social and spiritual context he faces.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

This section presents the research findings regarding the fulfillment of the five levels of human needs according to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory in the character Fahri bin Abdillah in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy. The analysis is conducted based on five categories of needs: physiological needs, security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization. Each need is analyzed through narrative scenes in the novel that show how the characters meet or fail to meet these needs. The selection of quotes and scenes in the table was done based on the clarity of the characters' psychological representations as well as their relevance to the conflict and personality development of the main character. Each category of needs is presented in the form of the following analysis table:

**Table 1. Table Analysis**

Hierarchy of needs	Data in Indonesia	Data in English	Pages
Physiological Needs	<i>"Maria datang dengan menenteng kantong plastik putih. Ia duduk dan mengeluarkan isinya; satu botol air mineral, satu kotak susu Juhayna isi satu kilo, satu kotak ashir manga, sebungkus roti tawar, satu kaleng vitrac rasa strawberry, satu kaleng cokelat, sekotak keju president, dan satu kotak tissue meja. Ia menatanya di atas meja yang masih kosong tidak ada apa-apa."</i>	<i>"Maria came carrying a white plastic bag. She sat down and took out the contents; one bottle of mineral water, one kilo box of Juhayna milk, one box of ashir manga, a packet of white bread, one can of strawberry-flavored vitrac, one can of chocolate, a box of president cheese, and a box of table tissue. He arranged them on the table that was still empty of anything."</i>	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 132).

	<i>"Kami pun makan Bersama penuh nikmat dengan diselimuti rasa persaudaraan yang kuat. Setelah makan dan minum beberapa teguk susu tubuhku terasa memiliki kekuatan kembali"</i>	"We ate together deliciously with a strong sense of brotherhood. After eating and drinking a few sips of milk, my body felt like it had regained its strength.	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 241).
	<i>"perjalanan melelahkan, kepanasan dengan perut kosong. Membuka pintu dengan kepala sakit luar biasa seperti dihantam palu godam. Lalu gelap."</i>	"It was a grueling journey, overheating on an empty stomach. Opening the door with a headache like being hit by a sledgehammer. Then it was dark."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 128).
	<i>"Aku telah meminta Hamdi menyetel beker jam tiga. Aku bersyukur memiliki teman-teman yang baik dan tetangga yang baik. Saiful memijat-mijat diriku sampai aku terlelap."</i>	"I have asked Hamdi to set the alarm for three o'clock. I am grateful to have good friends and good neighbors. Saiful massaged me until I fell asleep."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 106).
	<i>"Siang tadi pukul setengah empat Saiful datang dengan wajah cemas. Minta tolong Fahri dibawa ke rumah sakit. Fahri tak sadarkan diri."</i>	"This afternoon at half past four Saiful came with a worried face. He asked Fahri to be taken to the hospital. Fahri was unconscious."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 288).
	<i>"Kuminta dia keluar mencari makan. Aku menggantikan Saiful menjaganya."</i>	"I asked him to go out for food. I'm taking Saiful's place looking after him."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 288).
Safety Needs	<i>"orang Indonesia kau sungguh anak haram...Kau berani menginjak-nginjak kehormatan perempuan kami...Lalu menampar mukaku dengan seluruh kekuatan tangannya. Kurasakan darah mengalir dari hidungku."</i>	"Indonesian you are a bastard...You dare to trample on the honor of our women...Then slap my face with all the strength of your hand. I felt blood flowing from my nose."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 232).
	<i>"kau sudah tahu bahwa hukuman pemerkosa di negara ini adalah hukuman gantung. Sekarang kau hanya memiliki dua pilihan. Mengakui perbuatanmu... atau tetap bersikeras dan terpaksa nanti pengadilan akan menggantungmu."</i>	"You already know that the punishment for rapists in this country is hanging. Now you have only two choices. Admit what you've done... or keep insisting and the court will hang you."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 232).
	<i>"Aku terkadang tidak bisa memahami sistem yang berlaku di negara ini."</i>	"I sometimes can't understand the system in this country."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 235).

	<i>"Aisha, temani Maria dan ceritakan semua yang sedang aku alami dengan bijaksana padanya."</i>	"Aisha, go with Maria and tell her all that I am going through tactfully."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 295).
	<i>"Insya Allah, aku akan melakukan tugasku dengan baik Suamiku. Jangan lupa nanti malam shalat tahajjud."</i>	"God willing, I will do my duty well Husband. Don't forget to pray tahajjud at night."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 295).
	<i>"aku akui dengan sejujurnya Fahri tidak bersalah. Dia bersih."</i>	"I honestly admit Fahri is innocent. He is clean."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 299).
Love and Belongingness Needs	<i>"Siang tadi pukul setengah empat Saiful dating dengan wajah cemas. Minta tolong Fahri dibawa ke rumah sakit. Fahri tak sadarkan diri."</i>	"This afternoon at half past four Saiful came with a worried face. He asked Fahri to be taken to the hospital. Fahri was unconscious."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 287).
	<i>"Kuminta dia keluar mencari makan. Aku menggantikan Saiful menjaganya."</i>	"I asked him to go out for food. I'm taking Saiful's place looking after him."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 288).
	<i>"Maria datang dengan menenteng kantong plastik putih. Ia duduk dan mengeluarkan isinya; satu botol air mineral, satu kotak susu Juhayna isi satu kilo, satu kotak ashir manga, sebungkus roti tawar, satu kaleng vitrac rasa strawberry, satu kaleng cokelat, sekotak keju president, dan satu kotak tissue meja. Ia menatanya di atas meja yang masih kosong tidak ada apa-apa."</i>	"Maria came carrying a white plastic bag. She sat down and took out the contents; one bottle of mineral water, one kilo box of Juhayna milk, one box of ashir manga, a packet of white bread, one can of strawberry-flavored vitrac, one can of chocolate, a box of president cheese, and a box of table tissue. He arranged them on the table that was still empty of anything."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 132).
	<i>"Sungguh beruntung aku memiliki suami seperti dirimu. Aku mencintaimu suamiku. Aku mencintaimu karena kau adalah suamiku. Aku juga mencintaimu karena Allah Swt..."</i>	"How lucky I am to have a husband like you. I love you my husband. I love you because you are my husband. I also love you because of Allah Swt..."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 275).
Esteem Needs	<i>"Pukul 22.00 waktu Cairo. Handphone-ku berdering. Ada sms masuk. Dari Musthafa, teman Mesir satu kelas di pasca. Ia memberikan kabar gembira, 'Mabruk. Kamu lulus. Kamu bisa nulis tesis. Tadi sore pengumumannya keluar.' Aku merasa seperti ada hawa dingin turun dari langit... Seketika itu aku sujud syukur dengan</i>	"At 10 p.m. Cairo time. My cell phone rang. There was an incoming text message. It was from Musthafa, an Egyptian friend from postgraduate school. He gave me the good news, 'Mabruk. You graduated. You can write your thesis. The announcement came out this afternoon.' I felt like there was a chill coming down from the sky... At that moment I	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 44).

	<i>berlinang air mata. Aku merasa seperti dibelai-belai tangan Tuhan."</i>	bowed down in gratitude with tears in my eyes. I felt like I was being caressed by God's hand."	
	<i>"Syaiikh Utsman mengusap kepalaku, persis seperti ayahku mengusap kepalaku... Beliau menitikkan air mata dan berkata, 'Allah yubarik fik ya bunayya!'"</i>	"Shaykh Uthman rubbed my head, just as my father rubbed my head... He shed tears and said, 'Allah yubarik fik ya bunayya!'"	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 139).
Self-Actualization Needs	<i>"Targetmu dua tahun lagi selesai master. Empat tahun berikutnya selesai doktor dan telah menerjemah lima puluh buku serta memiliki karya minimal lima belas karya. Dan empat tahun berikutnya atau sepuluh tahun dari sekarang targetmu adalah guru besar."</i>	"Your goal is to finish your master's in two years. Four years after that, you'll have completed your doctorate and translated fifty books and have at least fifteen works. And the next four years or ten years from now your target is a professor."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 103).
	<i>"Penjara bukanlah penghalang untuk berkarya dan berbuat... Seandainya aku tidak bisa menelorkan karya di dalam penjara, kenapa aku tidak menggunakan kesempatan yang ada untuk belajar pada Profesor Abdul Rauf."</i>	"Prison is not a barrier to work and action... If I can't produce work in prison, why don't I use the opportunity to learn from Professor Abdul Rauf."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 269).
	<i>"Aku bisa belajar menambah ilmu, mentransfer ilmu pengetahuan dan berarti ikut serta mencerdaskan bangsa. Aku bisa berkarya, sekecil apa pun bentuknya. Berdakwah, dengan kemampuan seadanya. Dan yang terpenting aku bisa hidup mandiri dengan royalti yang aku terima."</i>	"I can learn more knowledge, transfer knowledge and participate in educating the nation. I can work, no matter how small. I can preach, with what I have. And most importantly, I can live independently with the royalties I receive."	(El Shirazy, 2004, p. 43).

#### 4.1 Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are the most basic needs in Maslow's theory, which include eating, drinking, resting, and body care. The main character in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, Fahri bin Abdillah, is depicted as a person who does not neglect his basic needs despite living as an overseas student in a foreign country. He lives his life with simplicity, but still maintains the stability of his physical needs.

##### a. Fulfillment of food and drink needs

The need to eat and drink is seen in various situations, one of which is when Fahri is sick and needs nutritional intake to recover. In this section, his friends and neighbors play an active role in helping to meet his needs. A very clear example is seen when Maria comes to visit Fahri who is sick. She brought lots of food and drinks to help the recovery process:

##### Data 1

*"Maria datang dengan menenteng kantong plastik putih. Ia duduk dan mengeluarkan isinya; satu botol air mineral, satu kotak susu Juhayna isi satu kilo, satu kotak ashir manga, sebungkus roti tawar, satu kaleng vitrac rasa strawberry, satu kaleng coklat, sekotak keju president, dan satu kotak tissue meja. Ia menatanya di atas meja yang masih kosong tidak ada apa-apa."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 132)

"Maria came carrying a white plastic bag. She sat down and took out the contents; one bottle of mineral water, one kilo box of Juhayna milk, one box of ashir manga, a packet of white bread, one can of strawberry-flavored vitrac, one can of chocolate, a box of president cheese, and a box of table tissue. He arranged them on a table that was still empty of anything." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 132)

Although this description narrates Maria's actions, the context is very clear that all the food and drinks were prepared for Fahri who was ill and needed physical recovery. This shows that Fahri's physiological needs are still met thanks to the social support around him. A similar situation was also depicted when Fahri was in prison. There, despite the limited conditions, he still tried to fulfill his basic needs:

#### **Data 2**

*"Kami pun makan Bersama penuh nikmat dengan diselimuti rasa persaudaraan yang kuat. Setelah makan dan minum beberapa teguk susu tubuhku terasa memiliki kekuatan kembali"* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 241)

"We ate together deliciously with a strong sense of brotherhood. After eating and drinking a few sips of milk my body felt like it had its strength back" (El Shirazy, 2004 p 241).

In the quote, it is explicitly depicted that the main character, Fahri, is fulfilling his basic biological needs, namely eating and drinking, which are the most basic physiological needs according to Abraham Maslow. In the hierarchy of needs theory, Maslow states that physiological needs such as food, drink, and rest are the foundation of all human motivation. Without the fulfillment of these needs, individuals cannot direct their energy to fulfill higher needs. The narrative that "my body feels like it has strength again" shows the direct impact of fulfilling these needs, namely the restoration of physical condition and restoration of energy, which is an important condition for being able to continue the next life activities. In addition, the moment of togetherness during the meal also provides a positive emotional context that plays a role in reinforcing this physiological experience, although Maslow theoretically separates physiological and social needs, but both can occur simultaneously in practice. Thus, this quote clearly illustrates the fulfillment of physiological needs, and supports Maslow's motivational structure, that without the fulfillment of basic needs, individuals cannot optimally actualize their potential or establish more complex social relationships.

#### **b. Sleep and rest**

The fulfillment of the need for rest is depicted through several scenes where Fahri experiences great physical fatigue. For example, when he felt unconscious due to fatigue and hunger:

#### **Data 3**

*"perjalanan melelahkan, kepanasan dengan perut kosong. Membuka pintu dengan kepala sakit luar biasa seperti dihantam palu godam. Lalu gelap."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 128)

"It was a grueling journey, overheating on an empty stomach. Opening the door with a headache like being hit by a sledgehammer. Then it was dark." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 128)

This quote describes the condition of unmet physiological needs in the main character, Fahri, who is experiencing extreme physical fatigue, hunger, dehydration or overheating, and a severe headache. In Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, this condition shows that the most basic human needs - food, rest, and physical comfort - are not met. Maslow emphasized that when physiological needs are not met, the entire human motivation system will focus on fulfilling these needs. Under these conditions, individuals will not be able to think clearly, consider social values, let alone pursue self-actualization. The sentence "And then it got dark" indicates the possibility of the body's condition reaching its limit, such as fainting, as a direct result of the body's inability to survive due to basic needs being ignored. As such, this quote is a powerful illustration of the psychophysical consequences of unmet physiological needs, which in Maslow's framework signifies that human motivation will remain at the lowest level until these needs are met. In addition, Fahri's housemates often help maintain his need for adequate rest:

#### **Data 4**

*"Aku telah meminta Hamdi menyetel beker jam tiga. Aku bersyukur memiliki teman-teman yang baik dan tetangga yang baik. Saiful memijat-mijat diriku sampai aku tertelap."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 106)

"I have asked Hamdi to set the alarm for three o'clock. I am grateful to have good friends and good neighbors. Saiful massaged me until I fell asleep." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 106)

In this quote, the main character Fahri shows actions that reflect the fulfillment of physiological needs in the form of rest and sleep, which is an important part of Abraham Maslow's framework of basic biological needs. The request to set the alarm indicates awareness of the sleep schedule, while the activity of being massaged by Saiful until he falls asleep illustrates the fulfillment of the body's need for physical relaxation and recovery.

This is in line with Maslow's theory, which states that adequate sleep and rest are primary needs that must be met before individuals are able to meet other needs such as security, love, self-esteem, or self-actualization. The narrative "until I fell asleep" shows that this need is actually achieved - not only physically but also psychologically, because it is accompanied by a supportive emotional atmosphere: gratitude and togetherness with friends. Thus, this excerpt emphasizes that the protagonist received social support that strengthened the process of fulfilling physiological needs, showing that in some contexts, the fulfillment of basic needs can be facilitated by a positive social environment, even though social and physiological needs are theoretically at different levels.

#### c. Physical health and recovery

The most striking situation that shows the fulfillment of physiological needs is when Fahri fell ill and became unconscious:

##### Data 5

*"Siang tadi pukul setengah empat Saiful datang dengan wajah cemas. Minta tolong Fahri dibawa ke rumah sakit. Fahri tak sadarkan diri."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 288)

"This afternoon at half past four Saiful came with a worried face. Asked Fahri to be taken to the hospital. Fahri was unconscious." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 288)

During the recovery period, Fahri's friends took turns looking after him and making sure he got proper food and care:

##### Data 6

*"Kuminta dia keluar mencari makan. Aku menggantikan Saiful menjaganya."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 288)

"I asked him to go out for food. I took Saiful's place looking after him." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 288)

Fahri's physiological needs are met consistently throughout the story, both in health and illness. The fulfillment is not always done by himself, but also by his social environment (friends, neighbors, wife), which shows social support for the fulfillment of the main character's basic needs.

## 4.2 Safety Needs

At the beginning of Fahri's life in Egypt, the need for a safe and comfortable place to live was met. He lived with fellow Indonesian students in a harmonious and helpful environment. This condition created stability in his daily life. However, this condition began to be shaken when Fahri experienced a major slander from Noura. The rape accusation directed at him caused his sense of security to disappear instantly. He had to face forced arrest and harsh interrogation by the security forces:

##### Data 7

*"Orang Indonesia kau sungguh anak haram...Kau berani menginjak-nginjak kehormatan perempuan kami...Lalu menampar mukaku dengan seluruh kekuatan tangannya. Kurasakan darah mengalir dari hidungku."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 232)

"Indonesian you are a bastard...You dare to trample on the honor of our women...Then slap my face with all the strength of your hand. I felt blood flowing from my nose." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 232)

This quote explicitly shows that the protagonist, Fahri, experiences serious threats to his security needs, physically, psychologically and socially. He is subjected to a very harsh verbal attack ("bastard son") that psychologically offends his identity and self-esteem, as well as physical violence in the form of a hard slap that causes bleeding - a real condition that threatens his bodily integrity and safety. According to Abraham Maslow, the need for security includes protection against physical threats, a sense of stability in the social environment, and security from fear or violence. In this situation, Fahri is clearly in an unsafe environment, both because of direct violence, and because of the appearance of discriminatory treatment based on national origin ("Indonesian you are really a bastard"), which creates emotional and social instability.

This condition illustrates that when the need for security is disrupted, individuals will experience high psychological stress and be unable to focus on higher needs, such as love, self-esteem, or self-actualization. In the context of the novel, this moment becomes a pivotal point that shows the external conflict that impacts Fahri's inner balance, and shows how important a secure environment is for one's personality and spiritual development.

#### Data 8

*"kau sudah tahu bahwa hukuman pemerkosa di negara ini adalah hukuman gantung. Sekarang kau hanya memiliki dua pilihan. Mengakui perbuatanmu... atau tetap bersikeras dan terpaksa nanti pengadilan akan menggantungmu."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 232)

"You already know that the punishment for rapists in this country is hanging. Now you only have two choices. Admit what you did... or keep insisting and the court will hang you." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 232)

In this excerpt, the main character is under extreme threat, namely the threat of the death penalty due to rape accusations. This situation puts Fahri in a state of absolute insecurity, both legally, psychologically and existentially. He not only loses physical security, but also loses legal certainty, trust in the justice system, and even faces the possibility of a tragic end to life due to slander. Abraham Maslow placed security needs as the second stage after physiological needs. These needs include a sense of security from external threats, protection from harm, and stability in life. When these needs are not met - as Fahri experienced - then basic emotions such as fear, anxiety, and trauma will dominate, inhibiting the fulfillment of other needs such as love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The protagonist's inner conflict is further exacerbated by moral dilemmas and social pressures, as the choice given to him is not justice, but coercion to confess to something he did not do or face the threat of the death penalty. This shows that legal and social insecurity can compromise a person's moral integrity, and demonstrates the complexity of the human need for protection from a just and humane system.

#### Data 9

*"Aku terkadang tidak bisa memahami sistem yang berlaku di negara ini."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 235)

"I sometimes can't understand the system in this country." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 235)

Fahri's statement expresses confusion and a crisis of confidence in the social and legal systems in his environment. The sense of not understanding the system is an indication of uncertainty, and psychologically gives rise to structural insecurity, which is the feeling of not knowing what will happen, how to act, or whether the right action will get protection. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, security needs include not only protection from violence or physical harm, but also security in social structures and systems, such as legal certainty, clarity of regulations, and the functioning of institutions. When individuals feel that the system around them is incomprehensible, let alone unreliable, insecurity, anxiety and helplessness will arise. This becomes a major obstacle to moving to the next stage of needs such as love, esteem, and actualization. This quote also illustrates the existential dimension of security - that security is not only about bodily conditions, but also a sense of control, clarity, and trust in the living and social environment. When the system is perceived as absurd or unfair, as Fahri feels in this novel, the crisis of security becomes total, encompassing the physical, mental and social.

### 4.3 Love and Belongingness Needs

According to Maslow, the need for love and belonging includes affectionate social relationships, emotional attachment, friendship, and the feeling of belonging to a community or family. In the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, the main character Fahri bin Abdillah experiences the dynamics of fulfilling this need through several forms: friendship, romantic love, and appreciation.

#### Data 10

*"Siang tadi pukul setengah empat Saiful dating dengan wajah cemas. Minta tolong Fahri dibawa ke rumah sakit. Fahri tak sadarkan diri."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 287)

*"Kuminta dia keluar mencari makan. Aku menggantikan Saiful menjaganya."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 288)

"This afternoon at half past four Saiful came with a worried face. He asked Fahri to be taken to the hospital. Fahri was unconscious." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 287)

"I asked him to go out to look for food. I replaced Saiful to look after him." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 288)

These two quotes reflect the warm social and emotional relationships and bonds between characters in the context of the need for love and belonging. The character Saiful shows deep concern for Fahri's unconscious condition, and immediately calls for help - showing that their relationship is not just that of roommates, but has formed a deep network of affection and care. Maslow mentions that humans need a sense of being loved, cared for, and belonging to a group, and these needs become more apparent when individuals are weak, vulnerable, or in need of support. In this case, Fahri, who is in an unconscious state, is still the center of attention and care of the people around her, which shows that the sense of belonging to her is very strong. Meanwhile, the narrator's action of telling Saiful to find food, and himself taking over the guarding role, shows an attitude of responsibility and mutual affection, which reinforces the need to give and receive love. This indicates that the fulfillment of the need for love and belonging in this novel is multi-directional - not only about being received, but also about giving attention as a form of actualization of affection.

#### Data 11

*"Maria datang dengan menenteng kantong plastik putih. Ia duduk dan mengeluarkan isinya; satu botol air mineral, satu kotak susu Juhayna isi satu kilo, satu kotak ashir manga, sebungkus roti tawar, satu kaleng vitrac rasa strawberry, satu kaleng coklat, sekotak keju president, dan satu kotak tissue meja. Ia menatanya di atas meja yang masih kosong tidak ada apa-apa."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 132)

"Maria came carrying a white plastic bag. She sat down and took out the contents; one bottle of mineral water, one kilo box of Juhayna milk, one box of ashir manga, a packet of white bread, one can of strawberry-flavored vitrac, one can of chocolate, a box of president cheese, and a box of table tissue. He arranged them on a table that was still empty of anything." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 132)

The need for love and belonging is an essential part of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, occupying the third level after physiological needs and security. In the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, this dimension is strongly reflected in Maria's actions towards Fahri, which are described in detail and full of meaning. In one scene, Maria comes to visit Fahri while carrying various necessities such as mineral water, milk, mango juice, fresh bread, strawberry jam, chocolate, cheese, and table tissue. All these objects are not only brought, but also neatly arranged on a table that was originally empty. This action seems simple, but if read from the perspective of humanistic psychology, it contains a deep meaning of love. The attention shown by Maria to Fahri through this concrete action is a very strong form of non-verbal affection. She did not just give food as a fulfillment of Fahri's physical needs, but also conveyed genuine care, concern, and a sense of belonging. Maslow explains that the need for love is not only realized through romantic or verbal interactions, but also through presence and care in the form of sincere actions. In this context, Maria acts as a figure who not only pays attention to Fahri's physical condition, but also pays attention to his emotional comfort. She is present as a figure who fills the vacuum experienced by Fahri, both physically (empty table) and emotionally (loneliness and isolation).

The act of arranging the food and drinks neatly also reflects Maria's efforts to create a comfortable and loving atmosphere. She doesn't just put things out, but arranges them with awareness, as if to convey that her presence brings calm and support. This indicates that love and belonging in this novel do not come in the form of dialog or declarations of feelings, but through actions wrapped in tenderness and sincerity. Through this scene, readers are invited to explore a more subtle but no less profound dimension of love-that is, love that comes through selfless service, care and concern. This excerpt is proof that in the main character's life, the need to be loved and to feel that he has a place in the hearts of others does not only come from a romantic relationship with Aisha, but also from Maria's sincere care that provides love in its simplest but most touching form. In a situation where Fahri is facing a great challenge, Maria's small act becomes very meaningful. She not only brought food, but also brought warmth, care, and a sense that Fahri was not alone. In Maslow's framework, the fulfillment of love needs like this is very important to support a person's psychological condition to remain stable and able to face the pressures of life. Thus, through this narrative, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* not only presents love in a romantic sense, but also elevates the value of love as a gentle, constructive, and saving emotional support.

#### Data 12

*"Sungguh beruntung aku memiliki suami seperti dirimu. Aku mencintaimu suamiku. Aku mencintaimu karena kau adalah suamiku. Aku juga mencintaimu karena Allah Swt..."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p 275)

"How lucky I am to have a husband like you. I love you my husband. I love you because you are my husband. I also love you because of Allah Swt..." (El Shirazy, 2004 p 275)

This statement contains a very deep affective content. Aisha not only expressed her love in the context of marriage, but also stated that this love was based on noble spiritual values. This shows that the need for love in Fahri is fulfilled not

only emotionally and socially, but also transcendental. In Maslow's view, this kind of love represents a form of belongingness that has gone beyond the ordinary relational stage and has begun to move towards a higher meaning - a love that is not only personal, but also of worship and divine value. The context of this quote shows that Fahri is not only a husband by legal status, but he is truly recognized and accepted in total by Aisha, both as a life partner and as an individual who is loved for his existence. Aisha's statement contains nuances of recognition, appreciation, and deep acceptance of Fahri's existence, all of which are important aspects in fulfilling the needs of love. Such love is not conditional love, but love that grows out of spiritual awareness and appreciation of a sacred relationship built on the values of faith. From a psychological perspective, the experience of being loved like this has a major impact on Fahri's emotional stability. In the various challenges he faced - socially, legally, and personally - Aisha's existence as a figure full of love and acceptance became a source of inner strength that sustained Fahri's survival. Love from Aisha strengthens Fahri's psychological dimension that he is not alone, that he has emotionally safe places and relationships, and that he is meaningful to others. Maslow emphasizes that individuals whose love needs are not met will easily feel isolated, experience social anxiety, and loneliness, but Fahri's character shows the opposite-he gets strong emotional support from his partner, which plays a major role in maintaining his psychological balance.

Thus, this quote not only confirms that the main character's need for love is fulfilled, but also shows how love wrapped in the sacred bonds of marriage and faith can be a solid psychological foundation. The love conveyed by Aisha in a gentle, affirmative, and spiritually conscious way shows that in the context of Fahri's life, the need for belongingness is not only present through social contact, but deeper: through unconditional acceptance, glorification of the role as a partner, and a strong inner connection between two people united by noble values.

#### 4.4 Esteem Needs

In Maslow's theory, the need for appreciation includes two aspects, namely appreciation from others (recognition, status) and self-esteem (self-confidence, sense of ability, and independence). In the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, the fulfillment of this need is evident in the main character, Fahri, both in how he views himself and how others treat and judge him.

##### Data 13

*"Pukul 22.00 waktu Cairo. Handphone-ku berdering. Ada sms masuk. Dari Musthafa, teman Mesir satu kelas di pasca. Ia memberikan kabar gembira, 'Mabruk. Kamu lulus. Kamu bisa nulis tesis. Tadi sore pengumumannya keluar.' Aku merasa seperti ada hawa dingin turun dari langit... Seketika itu aku sujud syukur dengan berlinang air mata. Aku merasa seperti dibelai-belai tangan Tuhan."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 44)

"At 10 p.m. Cairo time. My cell phone rang. There was an incoming text message. It was from Musthafa, an Egyptian friend from postgraduate school. He gave me the good news, 'Mabruk. You graduated. You can write your thesis. The announcement came out this afternoon.' I felt like there was a chill coming down from the sky... At that moment I bowed down in gratitude with tears in my eyes. I felt like I was being caressed by God's hand." (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 44)

This sentence represents Fahri's feelings of happiness and emotion after hearing the good news. His emotional reaction shows how important it is to be recognized for his hard work and struggle during his higher education in a foreign country. The news of graduation is a form of external appreciation given by the academic institution to Fahri. However, it was not only the administrative value that made this event so memorable, but because he had struggled with discipline, integrity and patience. When Fahri received the "mabruk" from Musthafa, he not only felt accepted academically, but also socially as part of the scientific and intellectual community. This makes his need to feel appreciated, recognized, and considered capable fully met. In addition, Fahri's reaction of prostrating and crying also reflects his own inner appreciation. He felt that the achievement was not only the result of his efforts, but also a form of God's love and defense of him. The sentence "I felt like I was caressed by God's hand" implies a very deep sense of gratitude, which brings together psychological, emotional and spiritual experiences at once. He felt that his achievements were valuable not only academically, but also existentially - that he was worthy, capable and blessed. This kind of experience strengthened Fahri's self-esteem, and confirmed that she was on the right track, both as a student, as a person, and as a servant of God. In Maslow's perspective, this kind of condition is very important in a person's psychological development. When a person achieves an important accomplishment and is recognized for it, his confidence will increase, and he will have the inner strength to face the next challenge. For Fahri, the news of graduation is not the end of the journey, but the beginning of the next stage - the writing of the thesis, and more broadly, self-actualization as a person who wants to share the benefits through knowledge. Thus, this quote is evidence that Fahri's need for esteem is strongly fulfilled. Social recognition,

personal pride, and spiritual gratitude combine into one experience that strengthens his dignity and confidence. This shows that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is not only a story about love between people, but also about achieving self-dignity through struggle, recognition, and a deep connection with God.

#### Data 14

*"Syaikh Utsman mengusap kepalaku, persis seperti ayahku mengusap kepalaku... Beliau menitikkan air mata dan berkata, 'Allah yubarik fik ya bunayya!'"* (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 139)

"Shaykh Uthman rubbed my head, just as my father rubbed my head... He shed tears and said, 'Allah yubarik fik ya bunayya!'" (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 139)

This quote shows a very intimate and touching moment between Fahri and Shaykh Uthman. The act of rubbing the head is a symbolically powerful form of paternal affection, signifying protection, acceptance and blessing. When Fahri says that it is exactly what his father did, he is re-experiencing the feeling of being loved and protected - a feeling that may have been long lost due to living as a nomad in a foreign land. The words "Allah yubarik fik ya bunayya" meaning "May Allah bless you, my son" further reinforce the emotional position Shaykh Uthman plays in Fahri's life. The word "bunayya" (O my son) in the Arabic tradition is not just an ordinary call, but a form of deep affection, usually used by parents to their beloved children. This speech directly makes Fahri part of a circle of love and spiritual closeness that is not only social, but also very personal and inner.

In the context of the need for love and belonging, this experience fulfills the dimension of affectional belonging, which is the feeling of being accepted and considered valuable in a love-laden relationship. For Fahri, this moment was not just a matter of interaction with a teacher or mentor, but more than that - he rediscovered the inner closeness of a father in a figure who emotionally embraced him as a child. This was very important for Fahri's psychological state who, in the midst of busy academic and social pressures, still needed an inner space where he felt safe and loved. Maslow emphasized that the need for love is not just about receiving, but also about knowing that our existence is meaningful to others. In this excerpt, Shaykh Uthman not only shows love, but also conveys appreciation and prayers that reinforce the value of Fahri's existence as a student, a spiritual child, and a beloved person. This indicates that the protagonist's need for love is not only fulfilled from romantic relationships or friends, but also from authoritative figures who serve as role models and sources of emotional affection.

Thus, this quote reinforces the idea that in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, the need for love and belonging is fulfilled through various forms of relationships - not only horizontal relationships between friends or partners, but also through vertical relationships between students and teachers, spiritual children and fathers. Fahri's character not only grows because of the love of people his age, but also because of the presence of love and recognition from figures who become substitute father figures, who provide blessings, affection, and personal meaning.

#### 4.5 Self-Actualization Needs

Self-actualization needs are the highest needs in Maslow's hierarchy, namely the need to realize one's full potential: intellectually, spiritually, morally, and socially. The character Fahri in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is a representation of an individual who has gone through the stages of basic needs to finally be able to live a life based on principles, beliefs, and devotion to the noble values he believes in.

#### Data 15

*"Targetmu dua tahun lagi selesai master. Empat tahun berikutnya selesai doktor dan telah menerjemah lima puluh buku serta memiliki karya minimal lima belas karya. Dan empat tahun berikutnya atau sepuluh tahun dari sekarang targetmu adalah guru besar."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 103)

"Your goal is to finish your master's in two years. Four years after that, you'll have completed your doctorate and translated fifty books and have at least fifteen works. And the next four years or ten years from now your target is a professor." (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 103)

The above quote shows a long-term vision that was consciously and determinedly designed. The setting of these targets does not simply reflect a desire to achieve academic degrees or achievements, but rather demonstrates Fahri's deep desire to be a useful, knowledgeable and intellectually productive person. In Maslow's perspective, the need for self-actualization is manifested in concrete actions to pursue the highest potential, both in cognitive, spiritual and moral capacities. Fahri arranged her life goals in stages: completing her education, writing and translating books, and finally

becoming a professor. This shows that self-actualization in him is closely tied to the world of science and scientific contributions to society. He does not want to just be a scholar, but wants to be an intellectual who has influence and a role in the dissemination of knowledge. More than that, the setting of these targets also shows Fahri's character who is directed, determined, and aware of time. Self-actualization in him did not come instantly, but through a long process that he designed from the beginning. He sees life as a battlefield that must be lived with vision and discipline. This is very much in line with Maslow's idea that self-actualization involves not only talent, but also full awareness, responsibility, and personal values lived with consistency. Fahri's self-actualization also reflects a desire to give, not just receive. By targeting the translation of fifty books and writing fifteen works, he shows that his contribution is not for personal grandeur, but rather to spread knowledge and provide benefits. In this context, self-actualization does not stop at individual success, but extends to social contributions and cultural roles. Fahri wants to be a scientist figure who is not only great in titles, but also has a wide impact through the intellectual work he produces. Thus, this quote is evidence that the main character in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* has a strong and planned self-actualization drive. He puts his life on a path of continuous growth, where every achievement is a foothold to move to a higher level. His self-actualization is a combination of academic, spiritual, and social contribution dimensions, which makes him an ideal representation of a human being who does not only live for himself, but also for greater value and usefulness.

#### Data 16

*"Penjara bukanlah penghalang untuk berkarya dan berbuat... Seandainya aku tidak bisa menelorkan karya di dalam penjara, kenapa aku tidak menggunakan kesempatan yang ada untuk belajar pada Profesor Abdul Rauf."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 269)

"Prison is not a barrier to work and action... If I can't produce work in prison, why don't I use the opportunity to study with Professor Abdul Rauf." (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 269)

This sentence is a strong representation of the drive for self-actualization that continues to burn under the most restrictive conditions. Prison, which physically limits freedom of movement, is unable to limit the inner, intellectual and existential expression of the main character. Instead of lamenting the situation or being trapped in despair, Fahri chooses to keep processing. He does not see the narrow space of prison as the end of everything, but rather as an alternative space to keep developing. This is the hallmark of an individual who has reached the stage of self-actualization: he is not defined by his environment, but rather creates meaning from any situation faced. The urge to continue working, learning and growing even within limitations is a clear manifestation of the human capacity to overcome basic obstacles and move towards higher spiritual and intellectual fulfillment.

The sentence also shows the reflective and creative attitude that characterizes self-actualization. Fahri does not merely wait for justice or feel victimized by the situation, but actively seeks ways to keep himself productive and valuable. He questioned: "Why not use it to study?"—a rhetorical question that not only reflects an awareness of time and opportunity, but also shows that his value does not depend on physical freedom, but on freedom of thought and work. In Maslow's framework, this is the highest form of psychological and spiritual maturity. Self-actualization is not just about achievement, but about the ability to keep growing within limitations, keep loving the process even under stressful conditions, and keep shining the light when the world seems dark. In Fahri's case, the thought that he can still learn from a professor even in prison shows that he has an intact self-awareness, growth orientation, and dedication to knowledge that is not hindered by his physical situation. Thus, this quote emphasizes that self-actualization in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* does not come as a linear process in ideal conditions, but instead is tested and proven in situations of limitation. For the main character, working and learning are not just habits, but forms of existence that cannot be separated from his identity. He does not stop being a human being who continues to develop, even when he is in prison. This makes Fahri a figure who not only fulfills the need for actualization, but also becomes a symbol of the existential constancy of an independent human being in the truest sense.

#### Data 17

*"Aku bisa belajar menambah ilmu, mentransfer ilmu pengetahuan dan berarti ikut serta mencerdaskan bangsa. Aku bisa berkarya, sekecil apa pun bentuknya. Berdakwah, dengan kemampuan seadanya. Dan yang terpenting aku bisa hidup mandiri dengan royalti yang aku terima."* (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 43)

"I can learn more knowledge, transfer knowledge and participate in educating the nation. I can work, no matter how small. I can preach, with what I have. And most importantly, I can live independently with the royalties I receive." (El Shirazy, 2004 p. 43)

This shows how Fahri is at a stage of life where he is not only oriented towards fulfilling individual needs, but also towards social contribution, continuous self-development, and a life lived with full awareness of meaning and responsibility. In this sentence, it can be seen that Fahri does not measure self-actualization with a large size alone. He realizes that working “no matter how small” is still valuable. This is a characteristic of an individual who has achieved self-actualization: he is no longer attached to external validation, but rather judges his life based on contribution, usefulness, and continuity of personal growth. The statement that he can learn and transfer knowledge indicates that he feels called to share knowledge - not as a formal obligation, but as part of his existence. Furthermore, the spirit of preaching “with modest abilities” shows that Fahri's self-actualization also includes spiritual dimensions and faith values. He does not wait to be perfect to be useful, but starts from what he has, in the way he can. This approach shows inner maturity, humility, and an understanding that the meaning of life lies in the process of giving, not in the splendor of results. Another important aspect is the statement that he can live independently from royalties. This shows that Fahri's self-actualization also includes financial independence obtained through a path that is in accordance with her values and abilities, namely through her work. In Maslow's theory, self-actualization is often related to freedom: freedom to choose a life path, freedom from external pressure, and freedom to be oneself. In this context, Fahri has shown that he lives an independent, meaningful and purposeful life - the key traits of someone who has transcended basic needs and reached the peak of his psychological development. Thus, this quote reflects that Fahri has entered the stage of self-actualization, not because of the luxury of his achievements, but because of his deep awareness of his life role, social contribution, and willingness to continue to grow in the values he believes in. Self-actualization in Fahri is not just an individual achievement, but a continuous process of becoming a more useful person, more aware, and more aligned with his life mission. This shows that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is not only a narrative of love between people, but also an existential journey towards an authentic and transformative peak of humanity.

## 5. Conclusion

This study shows that the character Fahri bin Abdillah in the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy represents the process of fulfilling human needs in stages according to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. Through the humanistic psychology approach and descriptive-qualitative method, it is found that the five levels of needs, namely physiological, security, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization, are fulfilled progressively in the main character's life journey. Basic needs such as food, rest, and health are met through close social support, while security is tested in the social and legal conflicts that befall the character. Emotional relationships with friends, spouses, and neighborhoods are evidence that the need for love and belonging has been strongly portrayed in the narrative. Meanwhile, self-esteem and recognition from the environment indicate achievement at the esteem level, which further paves the way to self-actualization through life vision, intellectual productivity, and social contribution. This novel not only depicts Fahri as a religious figure, but also as an individual who undergoes the process of fulfilling human needs in the midst of cultural, social, and spiritual pressures. Thus, the character Fahri becomes a concrete representation of an individual who successfully reaches the peak of existential development in Maslow's theory.

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