Chapter 4
Exploring Social Imagery Depictions of the Meeting of Human Needs in the Global South: Through Maslow’s Six-Layer “Hierarchy of Needs” Model

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ABSTRACT
A common narrative related to the Global South involves macro-level development for human well-being, involving endeavors for clean water, sufficient nutrition, access to universal education, access to energy, economic development, free trade, and political stability. At the micro- and ego-based level, development is about meeting human needs. Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” (1943, 1954, 1969, 1971) suggests that people tend to meet survival needs first before advancing to those of psychological and higher-level human actualization needs, from physiological, and safety needs to love/social belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-transcendence (in the six layer conceptualization). This explores “Global South”-tagged social imagery to explore the meeting of human needs.

INTRODUCTION
A core axis by which the Global North and the Global South are compared is development and resources, with the assumption of a “wealthy industrialized” North and a “less developed” South. The spaces are at different stages of economic development.
Beyond the basics, the Global South is a multi-dimensional concept:

The global south is a complex and dynamic concept that straddles multiple social science and humanist disciplines. Emerging around 2000, it reflects the agenda of two ascending forces in those years: the antiglobalist (alterglobalist/global justice) movement and the World Social Forum, on the one hand, and an alliance of Southern states within the World Trade Organization on the other. Generally seen as an inheritor of the emancipatory thought behind the notion of the ‘third world,’ in the social sciences the idea of the ‘global south’ is also entangled with more classical academic themes such as modernity, development, and (post)colonialism. (Kalb & Steur, 2015, p. 186)

In the short-hand of the academic literature, it is a space with many vibrant peoples (of many cultures) and with many needs, only some of which are being met.

Good government should be efficient and not wasteful of the people’s resources. It should provide for people’s basic needs, so they can survive—with proper food, clean water, healthcare, and proper housing. The national military should provide national security, and the domestic law enforcement should protect the citizens against crime and violence within. Government should provide an effective public education, so people can engage the world. It should provide meaningful work, so people can be justifiably proud. Good government should provide the space for citizens to explore their spirituality needs without undue interference. Ultimately, it should enable people to achieve their fullest potentials, without the hindrances of bias and discrimination, without the subjectivities and idiosyncrasies of individual dominant leaders. Good government should control for corruptions of all kinds that would fritter away the people’s resources for the personal gain of corrupt leaders and officials. In an abstract sense, government is of the people and for the people.

If one of the core differentiators between the Global North and the Global South is related to resources—natural, fiscal, human, political, infrastructure, technological, and otherwise—then it would stand to reason that such discrepancies may be observable, even in trace data, like social media imagery. One model used fairly universally to understand human needs is Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” (1943, 1954, 1969, 1971). This approach posits that foundational human needs, like acquiring food, water, and shelter for survival, have to be met first, and once the fundamentals are acquired, the human person can then focus on needs for love and social belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization, and ultimately, self-transcendence. Maslow observed that the lower levels of need were pre-potent to the higher ones, or greater in influence on the human organism (simply framed, hunger motivates more than self-actualization when a person is hungry). He wrote:

Human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of pre-potency. That is to say, the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need. Man is a perpetually wanting animal. Also no need or drive can be treated as if it were isolated or discrete; every drive is related to the state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of other drives. (Maslow, 1943, p. 372)

This model is seen as a “universal” for the development of the “mentally healthy” (D’Souza & Gurin, June 2016, p. 210), with a general trajectory of humans advancing from selfishness to selflessness (p. 211). [This has been so even with “little clear or consistent support” for the need hierarchy theory in the research literature (Wahb & Bridwell, 1976, as cited in Mathes, Fall 1981, p. 71)]. Maslow describes “another path of objectivity, that is, in the sense of greater perspicuity, of greater accuracy of perception
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