

The Representation of Social Issue in Song “We Pray” by Coldplay: A sociology of literature Analysis

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Abstract

This research discusses the social issues found in the lyrics of the song “We Pray” by Coldplay. The lyrics are analyzed to show how social issues are presented in the song. Song as a literary work is not only created as a entertain people, but as a reflection reality in social. This study aims to understand the meanings and symbols in the lyrics. The method used in this research is qualitative, by collecting and analyzing data. The results show that the meanings and symbols in the song represent spirituality, solidarity, empathy, peace, and togetherness. This song also contains represent about world social condition and public struggle. Besides that, this song shows music role as media social critic and facilitates that people can use to deliver the critic. This research shows that songs can be a good way to spread social awareness, not only has estetic thing, but contain social condition that happening in current era. Writer hopes, this research can give deeper understanding about connection between music and social condition.

Word keys: *Spirituality, solidarity, empathy, pray, social issue*

Abstract

INTRODUCTION

Literature can be understood as a work that stands on its own, without always being connected to the author. According to Roland Barthes, through his idea “The Death of the Author,” he said that we should not to interpret a book by referring to the author’s biography’s. The meaning of a literary work is not decided by the writer’s intention or background, but by the text itself and how readers understand it. Literary work are the result of society that contains beauty whether it written or spoken (Andriatik, Kanzunuddin, and Nugraehi: 2022). In this research, we chosen song as a research object. According to Yoga and Isroani (2023), song can be categorized as as a literary works. Song also demonstrate larger social narrative such as how race treated, religion conflict, and resistance (Barman et al:2019). Therefore, in

this view, literature is an open space where many meanings are possible, because each reader has different experiences and perspectives. A lot thing can become researcher focus while reviewing literary works, for example personal life, environment, and hope (Yoga and Isroani: 2023). So, the role of literature is not only to reflect reality, but also to create interaction between the text and the reader. Readers are free to understand the values, messages, and ideas in a work based on their own social context and personal experience. This makes literature dynamic and always alive in society, because its meaning can change over time.

Although many studies have discussed literature as a reflection of society, most of them focus on traditional literary forms such a novels and poetry. Moreover, these studies often rely on the author’s

intention in interpreting meaning. However, limited research combines the sociology of literature approach with Roland Barthes' idea of "The Death of the Author" in analyzing modern song lyrics. We decided to analyze song because in current society, music functions as more than just entertainment music also taking on the role as media to deliver emotional expression, cultural identity, and social commentary (Dabukke: 2025). Furthermore, the song can be used as a communication media (Kanzunnudin, apriliyana, Riysa, Surachmi, and Darmuki: 2023). This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing Coldplay's song "We Pray" as a literary work that reflects social reality while allowing multiple interpretations from listeners.

Literary works in the form of song lyrics can be a strong way to express human feelings and reality. This can be seen in the song "We Pray" by Coldplay, which gives a reflective and spiritual feeling through simple but meaningful language. Meaning can be constructed by connected it to reality in society (Tirta, Sari, and Dianthi: 2024). Through this song, we believe that Coldplay wanted to connect their feeling with listener's feeling. Song lyric got more attention in this era about how song lyric can make people feel related with the lyric (Lasyuli, Juminol, and Devi: 2025). The lyrics often use the word "we," which shows togetherness. This means the song is not only about personal experience, but also about shared feelings of people facing life's challenges. So, we can conclude this song really wanted to involve their listener.

From a literary view, this song is open to many interpretations. With its repetitive and symbolic style, "We Pray" feels like a prayer or mantra that carries hope, calmness, and a search for meaning. We can understand meaning of poetry through song lyric because song lyric is type of poetry (Lestari, Ayu puji, and Kanzunudin: 2022). Without depending on the author's background, the

lyrics allow listeners to find their own meaning, whether as a spiritual expression, surrender, or hope for a better future.

The sociology of literature theory by Ian Watt explains the relationship between literature, society, and readers. Song has power that can influenced human life (Mahamudin, Erny, and Sumiman: 2023) and deliver critics through song more effective to young people (Marina, Muktiyo, Kusumuwati: 2026). Based on this statement, young people from different generation generally enjoy music, which makes song an effective medium to spread social criticism to wider audiences because music easy to understand, emotionally, engaging, and closely connected to daily life experiences.

More than that, this work shows that literature has an important role in social life. Through its message of hope and togetherness, the song can build empathy and solidarity among listeners. In modern society, where people often face crises and uncertainty, "We Pray" shows that literature is not only for entertainment, but also for reflection and strengthening human values in daily life. The social problem developed massively become the basis for the growth of social critic trough literary works (Rifandi and Rizal, 2025). Song can become great media to spread our critics.

Ian Watt also highlights the role of the audience in giving meaning to literature. In the case of "We Pray," the message of prayer, hope, and togetherness can be seen as an emotional response to real suffering in the world, such as armed conflicts in different regions. The song becomes a medium for listeners to think about social and human tragedies, while also building empathy and awareness of others' suffering, without limiting it to one single "We Pray" reflects social realities like conflict, humanitarian crises, and injustice.

Watt sees literature as part of social life that can influence and be influenced by society. has the potential to shape collective awareness through its message of solidarity and hope. By showing values like humanity, empathy, and togetherness, the song proves that modern literary lyrics can connect personal emotions with global social realities, and encourage reflection and action toward human issues.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a literary analysis approach. The qualitative approach is chosen because this study focuses on understanding the meanings, symbols, and messages contained in song lyrics rather than numerical data. Through this approach, the researcher is able to interpret the text in depth based on its underlying social and cultural context. The analysis is conducted descriptively by emphasizing how meaning in the song "We Pray" is constructed and understood by listeners. The data in this study consist of the lyrics of the song "We Pray" performed by Coldplay as the primary data source. The lyrics are selected because they contain social, spiritual, and humanitarian messages that are relevant to be analyzed using the sociology of literature approach. In addition, supporting data are obtained from various sources such as academic journals, literary theory books, and relevant articles to strengthen the analysis.

The data collection techniques used in this study are documentation and library research. The documentation technique is carried out by collecting and recording the lyrics of "We Pray" as the main object of the study. Meanwhile, library research is

conducted by reviewing various references related to the sociology of literature theory and previous relevant studies. Through these techniques, the data obtained become more systematic and support a comprehensive analysis process.

The data analysis technique in this study refers to the data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The analysis process begins with data collection, followed by data condensation through the selection and simplification of relevant information. The data are then presented in the form of thematic descriptions to facilitate understanding. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and verification to ensure the validity of the data. In addition, based on Creswell, the analysis also involves reading the entire data set, conducting coding processes, identifying themes, and interpreting the meanings contained in the song lyrics in depth.

RESEARCH

1. Research context

This analysis use design qualitative analysis with descriptive approach. We chose this approach with purpose to understand and interpret the meaning that conduct in the song deeper. Through this method, researcher can analyze message that appear in the song systematically and contextually. So, we considered qualitative as most suitable to analyze and interpret meaning in data.

2. Preview

Data that we analyze in this research is song lyric "WE PRAY" as a object research. Source of data come from the song that conduct social theme and relevant with our research focus. The song lyric uses metaphor, symbol, and

diction that reflect specific message. Although, we hope data that we analyze can give description about meaning dan theme that writer wants to convey by listener.

RESULT

Theme A: human weakness.

This theme described human flaws when there's no help from the God. Invitation to pray to ask for the will power, because humans realized that for the steadfastness of a heart that is easily changed. Continued with the ask of strength and shows sympathy for other people, as we can see in the lyric "I pray that I don't give up, pray that I do my best. Pray that I can lift up, pray my brother is blessed" that shows the prayers that they mentioned. This lyric shows good relationship between humans and God is the most important and sympathy. Subject "I" in this lyric not only ask bless for himself, but asked to other people. We can interpret it to show social awareness and sympathy, we can pray for ourself as much as we wanted, but we can't forget other people.

Theme B: Injustice and Modesty

The next lyric is it ask for enough praying for Virgilio Aguilar Mandez. Aguilar Mandez is young migrant from Guatemala who was seemingly unlawfully accused as a person who cause a Police from Florida died. In the end, the accusation is dropped (Roman Ham: 2024). Virgilio is used for the symbol of injustice where indirectly we use prayers for justice to win in this world. This pray is continued to ask for Modesty. It shows for don't consider us as a perfect human and still aware that we still have mistakes like humans, this shows in the lyric "Praying for enough, pray Virgilio wins, Pray I judge nobody and forgive me my sins".

Theme C: Togetherness and Sincerity

The third theme identified in the lyrics is togetherness and sincerity. This theme emphasizes the importance of communal support and the genuine hope for the well-being of others during difficult times. The lyrics highlight that prayer is not only a personal act but also a shared experience that connects individuals in their struggles. In the line "I pray we make it, pray my friend will pull through", there is a clear expression of solidarity. The use of the word "we" suggests a collective journey, while the mention of a "friend" signifies a deep, sincere concern for the resilience of others. This is further supported by the lyrics "And so we pray for someone to come and show me the way", which reflects human humility in admitting that we often need guidance and the presence of others to navigate through life's "valley of the shadow of death." Furthermore, the repetition of the phrase "And so we pray" serves as a symbol of persistent hope and collective strength. It suggests that through sincerity in prayer and togetherness, humans seek a sense of peace and a future where they "will feel no pain". This theme ultimately portrays the beauty of human connection and the power of shared faith in overcoming adversity. The last

Theme D: Solidarity and Care

The next lyric says "And so we pray, we'll be singing Baraye". Song "Baraye" by Shervin Hajipour as freedom symbol, this is a song from Iran told about their feeling for freedom. Shervin Hajipour, 27 years old, got world intention for his song "Baraye" which rocketed to anthem status as the Women Life Freedom movement gained traction in late 2022 (Scalar: 2025). Through this song, people in Iran demand woman's right, better life, and freedom. The song writer used "Baraye" to show the protest for injustice and colonialism. It shows in the lyric "And so pray, we'll singing "Baraye". "Pray that we make it to the end of the day"

shows great fully because we can through difficult day. Is shows through the song we can spread social awareness and determine to against injustice together. Coldplay put this song title in the lyric to show universal support for justice and human right. All people in this world deserve to get comfortable life without any pressure such as slavery, oppression, and colonialism.

Theme E: Eternal Hope and Divine Reward

This stanza of the lyrics shifted the focus toward a transcendental perspective, specifically concerning eternal hope and the belief in a divine reward. The repetition of the phrase "I know somewhere" indicates a strong conviction and certainty in the existence of a better place, which acts as a source of strength for the subjects to endure their current hardships. In the lyrics "I know somewhere that Heaven is waiting" and "somewhere we'll feel no pain", the writer uses the concept of 'Heaven' as a ultimate destination that offers relief from worldly suffering. This suggests that the act of praying is not only about seeking immediate help but also about maintaining faith in a future state of peace. The concluding line, "Until we make it to the end of the day", implies a practical, day-to-day resilience. It shows that the hope for something "amazing" in the hereafter provides the necessary motivation to survive the struggles of the present moment.

Theme F: Solidarity and social togetherness

The theme of solidarity and social togetherness in the song "We Pray" is reflected through several lyrics that emphasize the importance of human relationships in facing life's challenges. The

line "Pray that love will shelter us from our fears" suggests that love and social care function as protection against fear and uncertainty experienced by individuals. "I pray you trust to let me wipe off your tears" means we also need victim's or people who needed believe to us. It shows support each other is one of kind action that make people can became stronger. The lyric shows to endure the pain together means strong solidarity. As a human, we don't need in the same situation with other people to feel what they feel.

The singer ask listener to empathize to other people condition. We can make example from condition in Gaza, Palestine. We interpret this lyric as a call to feel empathize with them under Israel colonialism. It shows in the lyric "Confront all the pain we felt inside".

Theme G: Empowerment and Honesty

This next lyric is focused on the people who fought for freedom. It written indirectly refers to a person who tried their best to get freedom. "So, for the ones who parted seas" refers to story prophet Moses who parted the seas to run from the fir'aun's army. So, if we connected to this era this lyric can refers to all of people who speaks and against for the colonialism in this era, if we see the current situation, it can be refers to every people who speaks for the freedom of Palestine's people or humanity issue in Sudan, Ukraine, Yaman, Somalia and Congo. "For the ones who's following dreams for the ones who knocked down doors and allowed us to pass down keys" shows the same thing. "Knock Down doors" symbolize destroyed things that chained us a door that closes or limit freedom, as if we were trapped in a small room without feel free.

This lyric followed by "And allowed us to pass downs keys" means we can't keep this value without spread it again to other people. It emphasized how important spread awareness is. It not the first time where

writer put lyric talk about spread society awareness. Honesty value showed in the next lyric “Pray that we speak with a tongue that is honest and that we understand how to be modest” shows to fight the evil that still in the honest value and modesty. “Pray when she looks at herself in the mirror, she sees a queen, she sees a goddess” in the lyric they pray that they have the confidence in themselves. Queen means the confident, goddess means strong and unstoppable. If we connected with the current situation, we cannot get through difficult situation with no the confident and the power.

Theme F: The importance of spirituality

The next lyric, once again Coldplay emphasize about spiritual value. As we know, word ‘Pray’ is connection about person and God. Word ‘Pray’ refer to someone ask help, hope, or bless from God. Lyric “on my knees, I pray, as I sleep and wake” shows about ours determine to ask God help in any condition. “Cause inside my head is a frightening place” means as a human, we still can have doubt in our heart and afraid. But, in the next lyric Coldplay once again give a message to stay calm, don’t worry, don’t afraid and we can keep our smile because his grace with us. The lyric contains high spiritual value. Chris Martin, singer and writer this song said, this song has no connection with specific region make this song can include more common listeners.

COMPARISON TECHNIQUE

The main theme in the song “We Pray” is mostly about hope. The word “pray” is repeated many times in the lyrics, which supports this idea. Compared to that, the theme of conflict appears less and only in a few parts of the song.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

1. The repeated use of the word “pray” creates a strong spiritual feeling for listeners.

2. The symbols used in the lyrics are also taken from real things. This makes listeners understand the song in a deeper and more focused way.

RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVE

1. As a researcher, the writer believes that the song “We Pray” evokes a strong spiritual feeling, which becomes the main focus. The words “we pray” show togetherness and spirituality in a simple but powerful way.
2. Social issues are not mentioned in a specific place or time, but this actually makes the meaning more universal. It also allows listeners to interpret the song in many different ways.
3. The songwriter not only gives a quiet message about struggle, but also includes real examples from the past as symbols against injustice and colonization. This makes the lyrics feel meaningful, not empty.
4. The message of spirituality and social awareness in the song creates a deep impression and becomes an effective way to reach more people and spread awareness.



CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, the song “We Pray” contains many symbols and meanings that are relevant in spreading awareness about current social issues. The lyrics show empathy, peace, solidarity, freedom, and spirituality. Through the analysis of each lyric, Coldplay delivers messages in a simple and clear way and related to society condition on thus era. It is

also found that the lyrics include examples of social products (song "Baraye") as symbols against injustice.

Overall, this research shows that songs can be a form of media that can spread social issues and have a strong impact. Therefore, this study is expected to encourage readers to understand the social issues found in the song as well as the issues around us. It can help to encourage awareness to a lot of people.

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