

A SONG OF BELONGING: EXPLORING DIASPORIC ROOTS AND RESILIENCE THROUGH THE SONG “I WEAR MY ROOT AS A MEDAL” BY SINGER DHEE

By

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Abstract

Music is one of the most powerful media and a universal language for effective communication and understanding. Singer Dhee, a Tamil-Australian, gives a strong voice to diasporic identity, cultural memory, and resilience through her single I Wear My Roots Like a Medal, expressing the intersection of personal narratives and collective histories within diasporic communities through the lens of contemporary music. This paper looks at how Dhee's song shows the complex experiences of diasporic identity, cultural memory, and generational trauma by mixing pop music and Western electronic sounds with elements of Indian traditional music, creating a sound that reflects cultural blending, memory, and migration. This study examines how Dhee's song serves as a representation of the lived realities of the diasporic communities, particularly the Tamil diaspora, by highlighting their strength and struggles. The study also emphasises how representing diasporic memory contributes to the field of diasporic studies. The song not only serves as an artistic expression but also serves as a sociocultural bridge, providing a voice that connects diasporic communities with their home and host countries, enabling them to reconnect with their roots. The paper argues in its findings that Dhee's song is a voice of empowerment and recognition for global diasporic identities by contributing to the broader spectrum of growing diasporic heritage through art and literature.

Keywords: diaspora, fusion music, tamil diaspora, music, migration, dhee

Introduction

Dhee is an emerging star, a singer in the Indian music who has a unique

blend of contemporary pop, electronics, and Indian traditional music. Her original name is

Dheekshitha Venkadeshan, born and settled in Australia whose origins is from Sri Lanka. Her emerging talent in Indian music industry have attracted as wide range of audience which has a diverse influence shaping her music style as her origin is deeply embedded in the Indian diaspora, as her childhood was steeped in both Indian and American culture. This exposure has a diverse influence that shapes her music style universally where she stand and address the Indian diaspora as she represents them by being a living diaspora herself.



She often blends Carnatic vocal and classic Hindustan music with the contemporary music of western pop

and electronic sounds. Emerging as a fusion this creates a unique and captivating style in music .The fusion started to create a distinctive and fascinating musical genre that connected the audiences globally. This article examines these elements of diaspora, cultural resistance faced by the expatriates' particularly Tamil diaspora.



*I Was Caught In the Middle
Spent Way Too Long Feeling Lost And
Refused*

*Now I Got My Foot On The Pedal
So I Wear My Roots Like A Medal*

*At My Grandma's House
Jackfruit and Puttu
Still a Dinner Time Staple
I Can't Leave Here I Stay Put
I Can't Leave Here I Stay Put*

*I Was I Was I Was Caught In The Middle
Spent Way Too Long Feeling Lost And
Refused*

*Now I Got My Foot On The Pedal
So I Wear My Roots Like A Medal*

*3 Nought 4 With the Neighbours
House Number 14 Got Bodied
Cards We've Been Dealt with Are Not in
Our Favor*

But We Work Better As a Set

I Was Caught In the Middle

*Pig Tails And Long Skirts
Bicycle Rides To Tuition
Uncle On The Way In A Red Shirt
Dodging Bullets With Intuition
Khaki Ain't My Colour
Camo Ain't A Style
I Wear My Roots Like A Medal
I Wear My Roots Like A Medal*

*Generational Traumas
Fear and Rest of the Mental Dilemmas
Weighed Heavy On Me*

*I Didn't Know How To Make It Stop
I Didn't Know How To Make It Stop
I Didn't Know How To Make It Stop*

*It Was Another Night
Catching A Red Eye
I Met A Girl Named Karma
She Said "Traveller Skip The Line"
Led The Way To Baggage Drop*

*Then I Flew Leaving No Footprints
Behind*

*For The First Time
I Tasted Freedom
Abandoned Them Baggages
Never Went To Claim Em'*

*My Past Is Written On My Body
My Future Is All In My Mind
My Past Is Written On My Body
My Future Is All In My Mind*

*I Was Caught In The Middle
Spent Way Too Long Feeling Lost And
Refused*

*Now I Got My Foot On The Pedal
So I Wear My Roots Like A Medal*

*I Was Caught In The Middle
Spent Way Too Long Feeling Lost And
Refused*

*Now I Got My Foot On The Pedal
So I Wear My Roots Like A Medal*

Credits:-

Composed, Written, and Performed by:
Dhee

Produced by: *Santhosh Narayanan,
Aditya Ravindran, Dhee*

Mix Engineer: *Santhosh Narayanan*

Directed and Edited by: *Amith Krishnan*

Cinematographer: *Abhimanyu*

Sadanandan

Production House: *Studio Moca*
Productions Private Limited

Exploring Diasporic Identity, Resilience, and Cultural Memory:

The song *I wear my roots like a medal* has vividly portrays the expatriates and diasporic elements on identity, displacement, cultural heritage and generational trauma challenges portraying dichotomous feeling of in-between of the two culture. This research aims to explore the diasporic experience, identity and memory though culture, through the lines we could also see the diasporic elements such as Caught between Culture, Cultural Roots as a strength, nostalgia, Generational Trauma, Survival, Escaping, Migration, Freedom and Identity that was written, composed, sung and performed by Dhee herself. The song starts with the line *I was caught in the Middle* introduce us immediately to the dilemma of a diaspora implying that she was caught in-between the host and home country. The word “middle” signifies the process of assimilation and cultural struggles navigating between two

culture and the dilemma of which one to follow. Has always been a conflict for any living diaspora. Dhee here reflects the experience of such dislocation and the inner turmoil.

The most striking line of the song is *I Wear My Roots like a Medal* underscores the resilience and pride holding onto one's origin and cultural heritage. Here the roots are represented as the badge of honor by symbolizing the connection between ancestors and the future generations as a strength maintaining their identity and origin. The lines reflects the pride diasporic individuals take as their heritage and celebrate in their adversity.

The reference to *At my grandma's house, Jackfruit and Puttu still a dinner time staple* evokes the nostalgic yearning of her grandma's place and the sense of belonging for her homeland, especially for Tamil diaspora tradition ,language and food serves as a bridge. Food is one of the major conflict that has been experienced by the every living diaspora as it acts as a major anchor towards the home land.

Dodging Bullets with Intuition Camo Ain't A Style and *Khaki Ain't My Color* highlights escaping the politics and conflicts in Sri Lanka. Which resonates the theme of forced exile or migration scars left on family and communities.

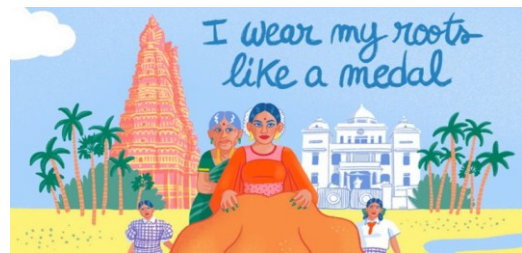
Generational Traumas, Fear and Rest of the Mental Dilemmas conveys the direct suffering and the emotional burden of being a diaspora addressing the struggle they undergo to overcome the traumas due to displacement that forms as a central aspect of a diaspora.

The symbolic journey of the migration has been conveyed through the lines *It Was Another Night, Catching A Red Eye, I Met A Girl Named Karma, She Said Traveller Skip The line* suggest a metaphorical guide leaving the past burden to freedom skipping the struggles in the journey of life embracing a fresh start.

Abandoned Them Baggages lines reflects the past trauma that has been left behind and embracing the freedom that comes into an aspiration among the individual as diaspora starting a new life

The lines *My Past Is Written on My Body* suggests the displacement, cultural heritage and generational trauma that has been inscribed into one's body like been inscribed in the mind. Being a diaspora always have an impact with searching for the past and one's identity. *My Future Is All In My Mind* indicates the hope in creating a new way of trying to assimilate in an host country.

Now I Got My Foot on the Pedal, So I Wear My Roots like a Medal signifies taking control of one's own destiny. And resonates with many other diaspora who finds way to balance their dual identities and feel empowered.



Conclusion

Dhee's lyric have explored the themes of identity, belonging and culture. The song serves as a bridge between culture, understanding and diversity. Dhee's music has gained recognition

worldwide audience by serving her music along with her talent. This song indeed contributes to the diasporic countries serving as a voice to diasporic communities worldwide.

The song has been appreciated by *The Hindu* Newspaper titles *DHEE RETURNS TO HER ROOTS IN THE LATEST SINGLE* on August 8th 2024.

HOME / ENTERTAINMENT

‘I Wear My Roots Like a Medal’: Dhee returns to her roots in latest single

The song features the singer in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, tracing her land as she sings about generational trauma and dealing with emotional luggage

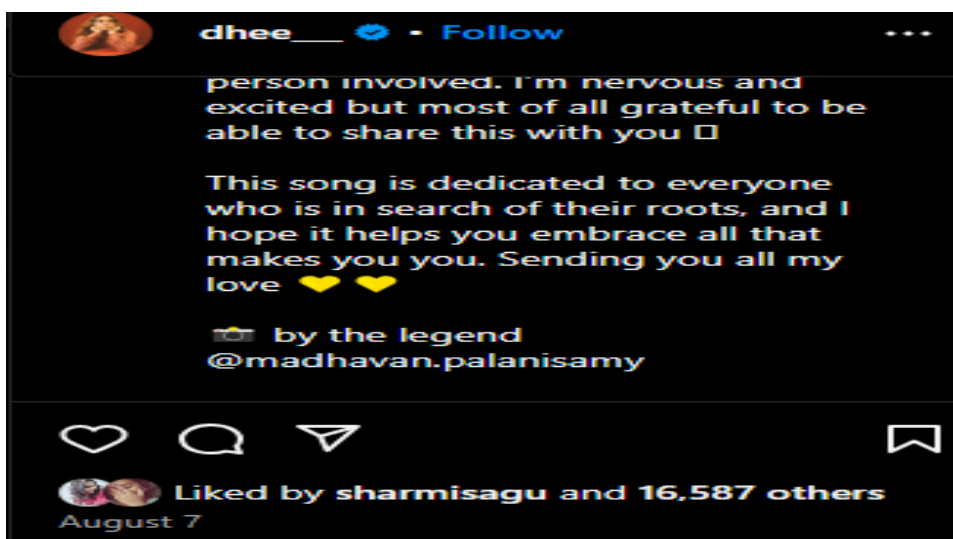
Updated – August 08, 2024 05:56 pm IST Published – August 08, 2024 05:13 pm IST

THE HINDU BUREAU

Dhee, in an earlier Instagram post, said that the song,

you embrace all that makes you you”(Dhee).

“is dedicated to everyone who is in search of their roots, and I hope it helps



Diasporic studies continues to evolve from various parts of the world through various forms of art, music and literature like Dhee's recent song

which gives a critical insights into the lived experience of diaspora highlighting the ways in which they navigate as a community in the world.

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Alisha Kumari, S. former Assistant Professor in English with three years of teaching experience at various colleges, Chennai. She has a passion for literature and has published a solo poetry book, along with contributing to 25 anthologies. In addition to her academic career, Alisha is an accomplished entrepreneur, CEO and Founder of Maya Magical Arts, having run business for 11 years. Currently, she is pursuing a full-time Ph.D. in Diasporic Studies at Department of EFL- SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur. Alisha's research interests focus on the complexities of identity, cultural memory, and the experiences of diasporic communities, particularly through art, literature, and music.



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