

Publication	Edition	Date	Page Number	Subject
Khaleej Times	Gulf	20/8/20	4	Ultra Media & Entertainment releases "Raat Ke Musaafir" featuring Sona Mohapatra

# CITY TIMES

## Sushant's death opened up a can of worms: Sona Mohapatra

**The outspoken** Bollywood singer tells **City Times** about her new song, favouritism and how Sushant Singh Rajput's death is an opportunity for self-reflection

**MICHAEL GOMES**  
michael@khaleejtimes.com

**B**ollywood singer-songwriter Sona Mohapatra is never afraid to raise her voice on issues that concern women. One of the most outspoken women in the Indian music industry today, she has been at the forefront in the fight for justice against gender-bias, sexual harassment and nepotism. The singer now tackles a common dilemma faced by working women in her new song *Raat Ke Musaafir*, which puts the focus on the safety of women who work nights.

The singer explained that the song is about women's triumph. "It's about the celebration of two women with a belly full of dreams, their sweet victory of camaraderie and sisterhood." The music video of the song was released to coincide with the Indian Independence Day and can be viewed on the Ultra Bollywood YouTube channel.

Mohapatra believes that she was chosen to deliver this track because of her strong views. "I have consistently stood for justice and fairness. My songs like *Mujhey Kyaa Bechega Rupaiya*, *Bekhauff Aazad* and my live performances have been a huge connect with the youth who care about change. That's why director-songwriter Ajay Govind thought I would be the best fit to render this track."

Though a single song cannot change mindsets, Mohapatra feels each brick laid out for change plays an important role. "The world is at a flashpoint when it comes to such issues and that makes me feel proud. This also means that the current generation is listening and having conversations (about such issues). They are much more balanced on matters of gender."

The singer also aims to break gender barriers with this rock ballad. According to her, such songs are unconventional in India because a rockstar status has been mostly reserved for men. "But subconsciously, this track breaks barriers. I enjoyed singing it because



it tells a story without patronising anyone. Women have been (traditionally) trained to speak softly in our culture. They are expected to sing like a high-pitched bird in a sweet voice and be a damsel in distress. This is 2020, those days are long over."

### #MeToo victory

Mohapatra was the first to call out Anu Malik during India's #MeToo movement. The composer was accused of sexual misconduct and was dropped as the judge of a singing reality show after Mohapatra went

on an all-out campaign against him. The win was seen as a symbolic victory for women. "I take pride in the fact that I have been a consistent and loud voice in the gender discourse in India. I fought and won one of the only victories in India's #MeToo movement, ousting Anu Malik from his seat in *Indian Idol* (TV show)."

### Sushant's death case

As for Sushant Singh Rajput's death case, the singer feels it has triggered something deeply painful in Indian society. But she does not like the way some media channels have been projecting the case.

"It feels like the death of meritocracy at the hands of a nepotistic, elitist setup. It (Rajput's death) has opened up a can of worms. It has also created an opportunity for the whole country to self reflect. Audiences are part and parcel of this problem, so is the media. I hope everyone learns at the 'altar' of this tragic occurrence. There are far too many unanswered questions looming over the case for people to let go. Nonetheless, the vulgarity with which some of the media channels have been tracking the case is distasteful, to say the least. The public tracking the call records of his girlfriend (Rhea Chakraborty) and the witch hunt is all too disturbing."

### Beating favouritism

Recently the singer made a remark on favouritism; on how hardworking professionals are hired only if they are willing to 'toe the line', 'bow and scrape' in front of Bollywood families. But she has found a way to beat the system. "The Indian music industry is merely an extension of the film industry and hence places too much emphasis on film music and also mirrors the systemic problems of the film industry. This has created a chronic lack of variety, quality and cultural influence while crushing any chance that upcoming talents have considering a handful call the shots.

"Also, the gender disparity itself is telling, there are no more than eight odd songs in female voices for every 100 mainstream releases. While the world has progressed, our industry has regressed in that sense. We don't have a real music industry, but a mere subset of the film industry. It's all clique based. The bigger issue that has to be addressed is not nepotism - that parents prop up kids is universal culture, albeit sad. However, the key is to find allies who share your values and belief systems. The music scene has been terrible in the last few years, but that hasn't stopped me (from working)."