



Mallika Sarabhai: One of India's most beautiful and inspiring women

By Raju Ravitej

To find exquisite good looks and a great mind in the same woman or man is not common in our world. Only rarely does one find the combination of gorgeousness and a penetrating intellect in one person. Rarer still is a combination of looks, mind and artistic talents. It is not an exaggeration to say that Mallika Sarabhai is a combination of all the three. Commonly the presence of even one of those qualities in a person is considered to be a blessing. Life takes on a totally special route if one possesses such qualities that compel the person to be extraordinary. And anyone setting out to describe such a person will be left with a feeling that no description would be complete. Such is the persona of Dr. Mallika Sarabhai.



A world famous danseuse, an actor, a writer, a choreographer, a producer and a social activist who stands up for a cause... Dr. Mallika Sarabhai is a woman of many achievements and many gifts. Her artistic and intellectual beauty gains great meaning through her exploits in performance arts and social activism. Dr. Sarabhai is a person of exceptional character and moral courage.

She started her career at age 15 by her performance on stage as an actress and dancer and went onto to win accolades all over the world through her dance. Dr. Sarabhai brings a deep relevance of arts to the problems that human beings face across the world. Her performances, acclaimed world-over, offer art as a means to break barriers. This important truth she portrays powerfully through her artistic and socially inspiring performance. Arts and artistes are great reminders that at the core of our being we are all human who can be touched the same deep way through our



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humanity. Art and artistes reflect the divine in us which they portray through their renditions. Dr. Mallika Sarabhai is a keen advocate of art as a means to greater understanding among peoples of the world.

Truths of life cannot be known merely by learning about them through our perceptive ability which comes to us from our intellect, our mind. Much can be learnt that way, but it does not become true knowledge unless a person experiences the truth. The experience of truth (*anubhuti*) is what makes a person 'know' the truth. People gifted with deep intellect and a courageous heart, a rare combination, pursue the truth to its depths. For anything less will not bring them satisfaction. And such pursuits of truth become their "experiences" of life. Experiencing truth is most often filled with suffering and pain. And that is one of the most forceful reasons why ordinary people do not pursue truths of life and continue to exist in their mundane lives. One who is strong in the mind and heart does not shy away from experiencing the trouble that comes from pursuing the truth and representing in their everyday life. Dr. Mallika Sarabhai experienced the truths of life through art, through thinking and writing, through organizing and moving people towards a firm belief and by standing steadfast for truth in the face of great suffering. To stand for what one believes requires courage and resilience which Dr. Sarabhai has exhibited in her life by voicing her support for the victims of the Gujarat riots in 2002 and promptly endured the consequent suffering from powerful people.

To combine physical beauty, artistic gifts, high intellect and be a woman in India is not at all an easy task. Life rises above the ordinary with such gifts and with such rise comes jealousy, resistance, conspiracy and violent opposition. To endure hostility, unfriendliness on a large scale and still stand by one's convictions requires great strength of character. And this strength is what Dr. Sarabhai personifies and exemplifies in her celebrated life and career.

Dr. Sarabhai reflects the strength, skill and social consciousness that young people need to inculcate early in their lives. She is a role-model for young people to follow. Dr. Sarabhai is a shining example of what strong character combined with skill and intellect can achieve in life. And thus she is the most appropriate person to launch Inspire India's TAPAS.

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