

TOI 13 May 2003

# Here, art meets science

**SANGEETA CAVALE**  
Times News Network

**T**he multi-dimensional Sharada Srinivasan is a perfect example of how art, science and spirituality merge into each other in spite of the seeming contradictions between them.

Her profile is impressive indeed. A B.Tech from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, Sharada did MA from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in art, archaeology and archaeometallurgy of South Asia.

It was in 1996 that she completed her PhD in archaeometallurgical and art historical investigations on South Indian metal icons. She did a thesis on Chola bronzes and the dating of the Nataraja.

A talented Bharatnatyam dancer Sharada uses a lot of mudras and abhinaya in her talks and lectures to explain many a point. She finds the icon of Nataraja particularly fascinating as he is a point of convergence for art, science, and spirituality. "Both physics and dance are quite similar in that they are a quest for the nature of reality. I find that Nataraja is in fact a visual metaphor for

scientific abstractions. Science is an objective quest, dance is an aesthetic approach while spirituality is a subjective quest for truth," she explains.

Sharada was in the Kutch town of Dholavira recently studying the metallurgical remains of the Harappan civilisation. She's been studying the icons at laboratories in Bangalore, finding out how they were smelted, analysing their chemical composition and more. A UNESCO sponsored project saw her go to Sri Lanka to study the bronzes there.

Sharada Srinivasan is currently a Young Scientists awardee and associate fellow, National Institute of Advanced Studies. She's written several papers and published books on Nataraja, metals icons of South India, evolution of metallurgy from the Indus Valley to present day south India, metal icons in temples and more.

Internationally known, she has uncovered previously unknown sites related to crucible steel making in



south India. She has documented metal crafts ranging from utilitarian to ritual artefacts such as bells and images from various parts of southern India.

A scholar conversant in both the arts and sciences, she is also interested in heritage management and education, the role of culture in development strategies, studies on gender from art historical, archaeological and anthropological perspectives and the promotion of traditional crafts and marginalised rural artisans.