



**DEEPA. OIL LAMPS.
INDIAN METAL OBJECTS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE
NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC¹**

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Introduction

No other country has such an elaborate symbolism of light in its culture as India. The tradition developed against a religious background originating in four *vedas*, classical texts that gave a prominent position to *Agni*, the god of fire and *Surya*, the god of sun. Later texts like *puranas* and *upanishads*, as well as epics, are mentioned by Indian authors as a rich source of quotations that document the prominent position of light and lamps in a religious and secular context² The enormous amount of lamps of various types and shapes represent extraordinary skill in decorative metal art. They have survived, in spite of electric light, as an integral part of Indian culture because they have come to be seen as one of the most characteristic objects of Indian everyday and ritual art. This makes lamps important in the eyes of most Indians.³ Lamps have a twofold function: an utilitarian one as the bearer of light and a votive use in temple and domestic rites and festivals.⁴

History

Lamps have been in use for centuries, and they have been created using the same technology for the same purposes – utilitarian and ritual. Though they may change according to fashion or individual taste, the general shape and type of lamps have remained constant. The simplest type of lamp – a bowl or another vessel for oil and a spout for the wick – is probably a prototype of the first lamps.⁵ Later on, some kind of

¹ Five items, figs. Nos. 17, 29, 36, 37 and 41 are part of the historical collections at the Chateau Libochovice.

² It is not the intention of this article to cover original Sanskrit texts regarding light and lamps. For more information see e.g. Kelkar, D. G., 1961.

³ The importance given to the lamps is also documented by Otokar Feistmantel who spent eight years in Kolkata in the 1870s and 1880s (see note 18): “Superstition of the Indians: The night before the wedding the bride should look at a lamp in order to become more beautiful.” Náprstek Museum Library, Otokar Feistmantel’s Archive, diary No.4 (11/2/1875–06/02/1876), p.220, describing, in addition to other topics, social life in Kolkata.

⁴ The most famous is *divali*, the festival of lights that is held in October.

⁵ See Kelkar, D.G., 1961, introduction.

stand became an integral part of a lamp. Further development introduced an abundance of forms and shapes. In this variety of forms and shapes we can differentiate between hand lamps (usually used for the *arati* ritual⁶), standing and hanging lamps.⁷ These basic groups include both domestic and temple lamps. From the beginning, temples were centres of inspiration for the production of lamps in a variety of designs. Temple lamps played an important role in temple rituals. Rich people used to give donations of both money and land to craftsmen, who could then devote much of their time to producing such pieces of art.⁸

Variety of shapes and forms

The most noteworthy motifs are those depicting animals and birds, as well as human figures. Sometimes they form part of the spout, handle or grip. The peacock, swan, and parrot, which are considered to be noble birds, are often seen in this type of decoration. They are stylised, and as decorative motifs they make use of the models of nature in their own way. However, there was always a strong preference for full and rounded shapes. In the case of temple lamps, they indicate the deity to which the lamp was devoted. Where the *linga*, *trishula* and snake-symbol are prominent (see e.g. Figs. Nos. 15, 16 and 17), the objects appear to be sacred to *Shaiva* devotees. Various animals are found on temple lamps, e.g. the peacock (see Figs. Nos. 34, 37 and 47), the vehicle of *Subramanya* (son of *Shiva*) or the bull *Nandin* (see Fig. No. 27), the vehicle of the god *Shiva*. The rat is connected with the god *Ganesha* (see Figs. Nos. 35 and 36.). *Hamsa*, the swan, means that the lamp is devoted to *Brahma* (see Figs. Nos. 29, 33 and 48.). *Garuda*, a bird vehicle of *Vishnu*, features on *Vaishnavite* lamps⁹. Elephants pour cosmic energy over the goddess *Lakshmi* and two parrots sit on the rim of the oil bowl (see Figs. Nos. 13 and 14.). Horses pull the god *Surja*'s chariot (see Fig. No. 20).

But there are also plain lamps that give no idea of association to any deity, especially various *arati deepas* in the shape of a simple bowl. Standing and hanging or chain lamps consisting of a drip and an oil pan with or without a column-like stand (see e.g. Figs. Nos. 19, 23, 26, 30, 38, and 41) also belong to this category. Birds are also found on the top of the recess or as the finial of a stand lamp (see Figs. Nos. 28, 29, 48 and 49) When figures on the lamps are hollow, they are used as a reservoir for storing oil, from which the oil flows through a tube that connects with the recess.

"Mughal" chain lamps differ in shape, decoration and technique. They are made of brass sheet and adorned with floral motifs, arabesque and geometrical designs. The purpose for which they were made was also different. Originally they were used in mosques and in Muslim courts and households to illuminate the space when lit at night. Later on they became equally at home in Hindu households, as is evident from decoration such as Hindu deities chased in cusped arches around the lower part of the lamp (see Fig.

⁶ *Arati*, ritual of *deepdan*, worshipping a deity by waving the light in a circular manner in front of the deity as a part of *arati*, the closing evening ritual.

⁷ Compare: Stella Kramrisch, who differentiates four groups – hanging, floor, wall and hand lamps. (Kramrisch, S., p. 128) and Deepak Kannal, who differentiates three groups – standing, hanging and *aratis*. (Kannal, D. H., 1987, p. 272).

⁸ Krishnaian, 1987, p. 252.

⁹ In Nepal, Vishnu depicted on the hanging temple lamp that is part of the Náprstek Museum's collection would be equally at home in a Hindu or Buddhist temple or a shrine. See more in the author's article. *Temple lamps of Nepal*. Annals of the Náprstek Museum, 2005, No. 26, pp. 51–57.

No. 54) This shows that decoration and design change according to the needs and tastes of the user.

The most favoured Hindu temple lamp is the *deepalakshmi*, a standing lamp in the shape of a young woman, identifiable with *Lakshmi*, the goddess of light and wealth. She is usually holding an oil bowl in her hands, her arms bent at right angles at the elbow. The style of execution differs from one region to another. South Indian *deepalakshmis* usually stand on drum-like pedestals, they are adorned with heavy ornaments and have a *linga*-shaped hairstyle (see Fig. No. 4). *Deepikas* from Gujarat wear a *ghagra* (see Fig. No. 7) whereas the ones from Maharashtra and also from the South are seen with a *saree* pulled between the legs¹⁰ (see Figs. Nos. 4 and 6). *Deepikas* from central India wear a *linga*-shaped hair band, have sharp facial features, a projecting nose, arched elbows, drop-like eyes and a small mouth. Their earrings are shaped like flowers.¹¹ Generally, these kind of lamps were kept on either side of a deity in a temple.

Depictions of lamps on various art objects

Lamps are seen on various items of both Indian classical and decorative art. Indian authors mention depictions carved on the walls of Indian temples¹² but for later periods we have miniature paintings, e.g. *ragamalas* depicting different moods including *raga deepaka*. The miniature in the collections of the Náprstek Museum represents the Mevar school of Rajasthan, late 17th or early 18th century. Against a background of typical Rajasthani architecture the most prominent person, a nobleman, sits on the floor of a chamber with a large cushion behind him. The other six figures are women, each of them with a lamp in her hands. (see pl. No. 1.) More recent is a votive picture with two temple standing lamps lighting symbols of the god *Shiva* (see pl. No. 2). Other items of decorative art in metal, ceramics or textiles depicting lamps are not found in the collections of the Náprstek Museum.

Literature regarding lamps

Lamps are usually mentioned in works on Indian everyday art. Most of them were published by Jyotindra Jain (see bibliography). The most competent work on Indian metals, Mark Zebrowski's book *Gold, silver and bronze from Mughal India*, mentions lamps in three of its chapters (including the introduction, p. 21). Chapter six, devoted to the oil lamp and candlestick, puts Indian lamps in the new context of Mughal and Iranian Art. Chapter five, on exotic animals and birds, mentions in the context of zoomorphic vessels the decorative finials of oil lamps that are particularly characteristic of India.¹³ He deals also with the animal motifs popular in India, e.g. birds such as the peacock, parrot, dove, pigeon, sparrow and *hamsa*. Stella Kramrisch, in her undated article on *The Arts and Crafts of Kerala*, is the only author (except G. G. Krishnaiah) to mention the relation

¹⁰ A large part of Gujarat was ruled by the Marathas and the way of living of the elites was not much different from Maharashtra. This is why the fashions and norms are not much different from each other. Kannal, D. H., 1987, p. 273.

¹¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Anamika Pathak, Deputy Curator of Decorative Arts and Textiles, National Museum, New Delhi for her help and ideas expressed in our everyday talks during my stay in New Delhi, February – March, 2006 and later on in many e-mails.

¹² See e.g. Krishnaiah, G. G., 1987, p.250.

¹³ Zebrowski, M., 1998, p. 95.

between Indian and Greek lamps: "The most well known and, the simplest in pattern and the most beautiful is the "*changalavatta*", known also as the "Greek lamp". It resembles a peacock in shape, the head portion holding the oil and the wick, the body serving as a reservoir for storing the oil and the tail, the handle to hold the lamp. A spoon is suspended on a chain connected to the reservoir."¹⁴ The most useful work for the typology of lamps is the monograph by D.G. Kelkar published in 1961 introducing one hundred and twenty two of the most typical Indian lamps. In some cases, at least, the characteristic details of a lamp have helped to identify some of the Náprstek Museum's items.¹⁵

The Náprstek Museum's lamp collection

Lamps are among the numerous metal objects in the Indian collection of the Náprstek Museum on which nothing has yet been written.¹⁶ There are not many of them, about sixty, and they are not rare compared to the masterpieces written about by Mark Zebrowski, for example,¹⁷ but they represent the variety of lamps that can be found in India itself. The catalogue mentions all of them, although identical or almost identical lamps that differ only in some details are mentioned but not documented by photographs. The Náprstek Museum obtained the lamps in several different ways. Besides lamps the origin of which is certain, such as the lamps given to the Museum as a part of a large Indian Government gift in 1958, there are many lamps that were donated or sold by various private individuals who are mostly not collectors but ordinary people. If the item belonged to a larger collection, e.g. that of Otokar Feistmantel¹⁸, then the name of the collector is mentioned¹⁹. Some of the most interesting lamps are included in the Museum

¹⁴ Kramrisch, S., p. 128. There is no other explanation of the term "Greek lamp". G.G. Krishnaiah speaks about the influence of figural antique lamps imported into south India in ancient times on the shape of *deepalakshmis*. But Indian artists paid more attention to the body of lamp made in the shape of a young woman. Krishnaiah, G. G., 1987, p. 253.

¹⁵ Kelkar, D.G., 1961, introduction.

¹⁶ The Indian metal collection includes a vast number of items, not only rare ones but in many ways typical objects of everyday art that were not written about much until the 1960s when some Indian scholars, notably Jyotindra Jain, produced publications on Indian utensils and various items of Indian everyday art. The Náprstek Museum has items representing the various crafts centres in India from the 19th century until the present day, with the accent on 19th-century items. These items have become an integral part of art history because they mostly represent an uninterrupted tradition that continuing for centuries. The intention of the author is to gradually write about most of the items in the metal collection. For articles relating to other parts of the metal collection see the previous volumes of the Annals of the Náprstek Museum, where the author has presented the *bidri* ware collection (see Annals of the Náprstek Museum, 2001, No. 22, pp. 1–25), nut crackers (see Annals of the Náprstek Museum, 2004, No. 25, pp. 1–16) and individual metal objects from the collection of the Náprstek Museum (see Annals of the Náprstek Museum 2003, No. 24, pp. 13–18 and 2005, No. 26, pp. 51–57). Covering metal oil lamps is only the next step in this direction. Other metal items such as cosmetic boxes and implements, inkpots and various vessels will follow.

¹⁷ Zebrowski, M., 1997, pp. 111–119.

¹⁸ Otokar Feistmantel, Czech geologist and palaeontologist who worked for the Geological Survey of India in Kolkata from 1875 to 1883. He collected almost one thousand items in India. Most of his collection, more than seven hundred items, belong to the initial part of the Indian collection of the Náprstek Museum, Prague.

¹⁹ It refers also to the collection at the Chateau Libochovice, in the Usti nad Labem region, Northern Bohemia, previously owned by Herberstein's family. Johann Joseph Herberstein (1854–1944), the last owner of the Chateau Libochovice, visited India (three times), Egypt, Syria and Persia in the 1880's. He collected various items of everyday art, arms and textiles originating in the countries he visited, and these have been preserved at Chateau Libochovice, state property since the end of World War II. The lamps that have been included in this catalogue are highly authentic material, very relevant to this article.

Register (or Inventory Book), with no origin or with a little abbreviation that refers to the lists of items transferred to the Náprstek Museum mostly in the 1950s or 1960s from Czech regional museums with no documentation. We can only guess what the source might have been. All these facts mean that the place of origin of items in India and their chronology are, to a large degree, conjectural.

Technique and material

The great majority of items in the collection of the Náprstek Museum were cast by *cire perdue* or lost wax process and made of brass.²⁰ Some of the items are recorded as being made of bronze or, more precisely, bell metal.²¹ However, zinc is more common in India than tin. Brass is evident at first sight, so that laboratory tests were not considered necessary except for a few items where comparable pieces were declared in the literature as bell metal (see figs. Nos. 13, 46 and 47)²²

Typology of the collection

The typology of the individual items was made on the basis of comparison with, first, other items in the Náprstek Museum collections, not only lamps, secondly with items written about by various authors (see the bibliography below) and last on the basis of personal consultations (see note 12). In some cases we can see the affinity of some lamps, especially standing ones that adorned chambers, with miniature paintings, e.g. depicting *raga dipaka* (see pl. No.1)

The simplest one, which might be called a prototype of oil lamps in the shape of a bowl, or in this case of a spoon (Fig. No. 23), with no pedestal and no handle, is one of the oldest pieces that came to the museum under its founder, Vojta Náprstek, in the 1870s. It was sent by Otokar Feistmantel²³, who was a keen observer of Indian daily life. In addition to his notes on the lighting of Kolkata by thousands of oil lamps during the visit of Prince of Wales in 1876²⁴, he made a drawing of this kind of lamp in his diary (see Fig.No.23b).

²⁰ Copper alloys in India vary depending on the ingots made of recycled metal. In addition to copper they can include a small amount of silver (e.g. from surface decoration), arsenic, lead and other metals not usually found in brass, which is made of copper and zinc.

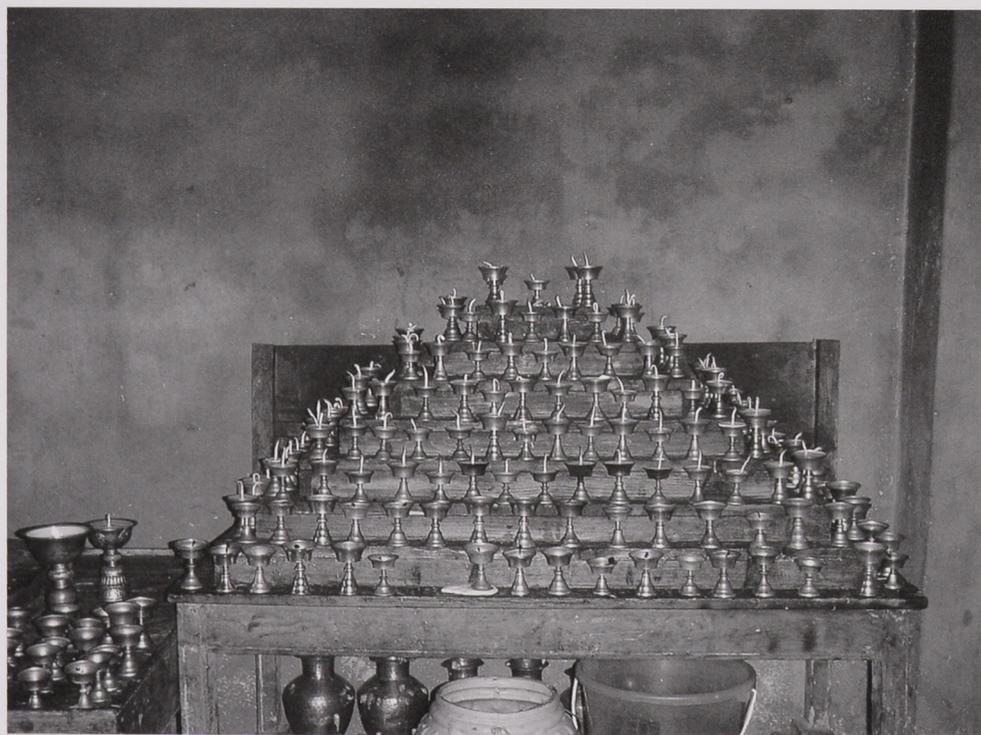
²¹ The composition of bronze or bell metal is copper and tin.

²² The test was made by Petr Průša, Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering, Czech Technical University, Prague

²³ Most of the items from his collections are noted in the old register of the Náprstek Museum as Gift of Josefa Náprstková, arranged by MUDr. Otokar Feistmantel. Sometimes it is a problem to identify Feistmantel's collection because the items were registered again since the 1960s and very often the old register was not mentioned. The items were described as "origin unknown".

²⁴ Otokar Feistmantel describes his fascination with the decoration by oil lamps not only of individual buildings but of whole streets during the visit of Prince of Wales to Kolkata at Christmas 1875: "These streets (where the procession of Prince of Wales will go) are ready for lighting.....There are many victorious arches in the Oriental manner....the effect of which depends on lighting. Houses and street are adorned in various ways, including gaslights, but the most important and the most original is an enormous quantity of little lamps. [Author's note: these lights were made of glass, so that they differ from the material described in the article, but the importance given to this method of adornment was high, as seen from Feistmantel's diary]. In some streets there are garlands of these lamps, the number of which runs into millions....Our Geological Survey office spent more than a hundred thousand of these lamps....They will have to employ about forty thousand people to light them." Náprstek Museum Library, Otokar Feistmantel's Archive, diary No.4 (11/2/1875-06/02/1876), page 491, 20th December 1875.

The prominent position occupied by ritual temple lamps in Indian tradition means these lamps also hold an exceptional position in the collection of the Náprstek Museum. They are both lamps and sculptures at the same time. In addition to *deepalakshmis* and *aratis* in the shape of a young woman holding bowls for oil (usually five or seven) in her hands, lamps called *pancharati* or *satphulam deepa* gave craftsmen the opportunity to express their imagination regarding the depicted woman. *Arati deepas* worshipping the deity by fire are executed also in other shapes, including various animals such as lions (see fig. No. 21), snakes (see figs. Nos. 15, 16, 18) and vessels (see figs. Nos. 22, 24, 25, 40 and 41).



Pl. No. 3. Votive lamps in shrine of the Buddhist monastery in the Himalayas near Darjeeling, India, West Bengal. Photo by author. 2006.

Catalogue

Notes on the text

The catalogue entries are continuously numbered, regardless of the categories of the items. The categories are labelled from A to F. Each lamp is briefly described in the following way: The category of the lamp, e.g. *deepalakshmi*, is repeated at the beginning of the description, then the material, place, date, original owner and the date of acquisition, followed by the measurements in centimetres (at least two measurements are given, if necessary more, especially the diameter) and by the inventory number. The provenance is given on the basis of first, the inventory books – we use the formulation: ‘said to be from’, or secondly, on the stylistic features or other details as stated above in the section entitled ‘Determination of the items’. Dating, if not certain from the inventory book, covers the range of possibility (as mentioned also in the section entitled ‘The Náprstek Museum’s lamp collection, see above). After a short description, a note on the comparative material published in the relevant literature has been included.

A. *Deepalakshmi*

1. *Deepalakshmi*. Brass. South India. 1950s.
Gift of All India Handicraft Board, 1958.
Height 14.6 cm, pedestal 5 x 5.5 cm.
Inv. No. 13 447.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman standing on a lotus pedestal and holding an oil bowl in her hands. A parrot is perched on her right shoulder. She wears ornaments including heavy rounded earrings, her hair is plaited and her blouse, *choli*, is decorated with geometric lozenge designs.

Compare: Kelkar, D.G., pl. 72



2. *Deepalakshmi*. Brass. South India.
Beginning of 20th century.
Old acquisitions, 1950s.²⁵
Height 13.5 cm, pedestal 3.5 x 3.8 cm.
Inv. No. 18 503.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman standing on a square pedestal and holding an oil bowl in her hands. She wears her hair tied up on one side of her head.

Compare: Varma, D.N., 1975, pl. XXXVI.
This *deepalakshmi* from the Andhra Pradesh Government Museum is decorated in a comparable manner (notice the geometrical lozenge design on her shoulders).



3. *Deepalakshmi*. Brass. South India. First half of 20th century. Old acquisition (see note no. 25), 1950s.
Height 8 cm, pedestal 2.8 x 3 cm.
Inv. No. 18 515.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman with her hair in a bun on the top of her head, standing on a lotus pedestal and holding a bowl in her hands. A parrot is perched on her right shoulder. The collection includes other two comparable pieces: Inv. No. A 14 232. Brass. South India. 1970's. Bought from the private collection of an indologist, 1977. Height 9.8 cm, pedestal 3.5 x 3.5 cm and Inv. No. A 15 135. Brass. Tamil Nadu, South India. 1970s. Bought from a private collection, 1985. Height 9.6 cm, pedestal 3.2 x 3.2 cm.



Compare: Kelkar, D.G., pl. 72 and 66
(*Deepalakshmi* with a *linga* on her head).

²⁵ Old acquisitions is a category that includes items that were transferred to the Náprstek Museum with no documentation from various institutions, including regional museums, mostly in the 1950s and 1960s.

4. *Deepalakshmi*. Brass. South India. 1950s.
Bought from a private individual, 1961.
Height 20.3 cm, pedestal 6 x 6 cm.
Inv. No. A 36.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman with her hair in a bun on the top of her head, standing on a double lotus pedestal and holding a bowl in her hands. A parrot perched on her right shoulder is broken. There is another almost identical piece, Inv. No. A 18 198. Brass. South India. Second half of 20th century. Bought from antique shop, 1987. Height 17.6 cm, pedestal 5.5 x 5.5 cm

Compare: Kelkar, D.G., pl. 66 (*Deepalakshmi* with a *linga* on her head).



5. *Deepalakshmi*. Brass. India, said to be from Rajasthan. Beginning of 20th century.
Bought from a local museum, 1984.
Height 20.5 cm, pedestal perimeter 4.8 cm.
Inv. No. A 15 109.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman, standing on a circular flat pedestal and holding a rounded bowl in her hands with a projecting spout. The young woman wears a skirt decorated with engraved horizontal stripes. She is adorned with wing-like earrings. She has a "third eye" on her forehead.

Compare: Varma, D. N.: Monograph on Brass in Andhra Pradesh Government Museum 1975. Pl. No. XXXVI.



6. *Deepalakshmi* Brass. South India.
19th century. Bought from a private
individual, 1975.
Height 29 cm, pedestal 10.6 x 12 cm.
Inv. No. A 12 104.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman,
standing on a bulging pedestal with
engraved lotus leaves, on a square flat
base. The young woman wears a *sari* in
the South Indian manner and decorated
with an engraved flower design. She is
adorned with heavy jewellery and she has
two *shankhas* and other Vishnu symbols
engraved on her shoulders and forehead.
She holds a rounded bowl with a projecting
spout in her hands. This wonderful lamp
of a young, nicely proportioned woman is
manufactured in a skilled way. It probably
adorned a Vishnu temple in the South India
standing on either side of the deity.



Compare: Catalogue. Utensils exhibition.
Vechar (no pagination)

7. *Deepalakshmi*. Brass. India, Madhya
Pradesh or Gujarat. 19th century. Bought
from a private person who bought it at
a Delhi market, 1959.
Height 21.2 cm, pedestal 6 x 6 cm.
Inv. No. 46 331.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman
standing on a square pedestal and holding
a shallow bowl in her hands that is fixed
on a hook below. She wears an undecorated
skirt and simple ornaments, her earrings
are in the shape of flowers, her conical
hair style is reminiscent of a *linga*. These
kind of earrings and conical hair style are
typical of Central India²⁶



²⁶ For this and other observations I am grateful to Anamika Pathak, Decorative Art & Textiles Deputy Curator, National Museum, New Delhi.

8. *Deepalakshmi pancharati*. Brass. India, probably Uttar Pradesh²⁷. 1870s or 1880s. Bought from Cyril Purkyně, the heir of Otokar Feistmantel, 1960. Height 19.2 cm, pedestal 2.2 x 2.5 cm. Inv. No. 43 511ab.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman standing on a square pedestal and holding five bud-shaped bowls in her hands. It has a bow-like handle at the back that makes the lamp movable when it is used in front of a deity for the *arati* ritual.



9. *Deepalakshmi satphulam*. Brass. India, said to be from Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi. 1950s. Bought from a private individual who acquired it in India in the second half of the 20th century. Height 11.5 cm, width 15 cm, depth 11.5 cm. Inv. No. A 14 233ab.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman standing on a lotus pedestal with a square base, holding seven bud-shaped and two circular flower-like bowls on each side of a row made of bud bowls. The lamp has a handle at the back finished with a snake hood rising above the woman to protect her. The lamp is roughly executed compared to the previous item (see fig. No. 9, inv. No. 43 511ab) that was made almost century earlier. Its shape is almost the same, however.



²⁷ Compare the stylisation of the woman's figure, especially her hair style, and the shape of bowls with fig. No. 9, inv. No. A 14 233 bought in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh in the 1970s.

10. *Deepalakshmi pancharati*. Brass, red lac. India, probably Uttar Pradesh or Bengal.²⁸ 19th century. Old acquisition (see note no. 25), 1950s. Height 16.2 cm, pedestal 5 x 5 cm. Inv. No. 43 577ab.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman standing on a lotus pedestal with a square base and holding five bud-shaped bowls with stems in her hands. This kind of execution makes the lamp exceptional, as well as the remnants of red lac colouring embellishing various parts of the female body.²⁹



11. *Deepalakshmi pancharati* Brass. India, probably Gujarat. 18th – 19th century. Bought from an antique shop, 1994. Height 19 cm, diameter of pedestal 8 cm. Inv. No. A 25 840.

Lamp in the shape of a young woman standing on a circular lotus pedestal and holding five bowls in her hands. The bowls are reminiscent of tulip buds. The lamp has a bow-like handle at the back that makes the lamp easily movable during the *arati* ritual. The woman's dress, including a short skirt and decoration, is very modest, as is her hair style. The lamp is nicely executed. All its parts – the woman's figure like a young *devadasi* dancing girl, standing in the *dvibhanga* position and holding the bowls – are very well-proportioned.



Compare: Jain, J., *Utensils*, 1984, p. 35, pl. No. 67 (the same shape of the wick-pan).

²⁸ The shape and the way the square base of the lotus stand is executed are reminiscent of item inv. No. A 14 233, see fig. No. 9 bought in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh in the 1970s. The observed item is older and the craftsmanship is finer.

²⁹ Red lac is connected with the way women decorate themselves, especially before meeting their beloved. More generally, red lac is associated with female beauty and attractiveness.

12. *Deepalakshmi pancharati*. Brass. India, said to be from Bengal. 19th century. Old acquisition (see note no. 25), 1950s. Height 11 cm, width 11.8 cm, depth 14 cm. Inv. No. 18 545.

Lamp in the shape of a woman holding in her hands a kind of platform with five oil bowls supported by a heavy circular stand. There is a hooded cobra raising itself up in front of the woman. The woman wears a skirt and adornments including bold circular earrings. Her head is covered with a strip of textile, her facial features are sharp. She stands on a flat circular pedestal connected to the front domed stand.



Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No.5 (a comparable item is declared to be a pure example of folk art) and Bussabarger, R., p. 85 (see the comparable shape of five oil bowls).

13. *Gajalakshmi deepa*. Bronze³⁰. India, said to be from West Bengal. 19th century. Gift of a private individual who bought it in India in the 1950s.

Height 13.4 cm, width 8 cm, depth 11 cm, diameter of bowl 8 cm. Inv. No. 13 547. Inv. No. 13 850 is almost identical, bought from an antique shop in 1960. The facial features of the goddess have been worn away through the handling over the course of time. Other comparable pieces are inv. No. A 18 282, said to be from South India, bought from a private individual in 1988; and inv. No. A 20 088, also almost identical but said to be from West Bengal, given in 1991 by a private individual who spent some time in India in the 1970s.



³⁰ For the alloy composition see the Appendix, fig. 1.

14. *Gajalakshmi deepa*. Brass. South India. 18th – 19th century. Bought from antique shop, 1965. Height 20.2 cm, width 14.5 cm, depth 15.5 cm, diameter of bowl 13.8 cm. Inv. No. A 3 509.

Gajalakshmi lamp with two parrots on the rim of a bowl. There are two women attendants on each side of the seated goddess, as well as two elephants with their front legs on her lotus pedestal. The flame arch above the goddess has been finished with the *kirtimukha* on the top. This lamp is different from the previous *Gajalakshmi* lamps; the goddess, together with the other people and animals, has been executed as a sculpture not a relief. Larger and heavier than the others, it is a piece of fine craftsmanship.



Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No.69.

B. Arati Lamps

15. *Pancharati deepa*. Brass. South India. 19th century. Bought from a private individual who obtained it in India in the 1970s. Height 6.9 cm, width 8 cm, depth 15.2 cm. Inv. No. A 14 228.

Ritual lamp with five oil bowls (four bowls in a row and the last above on the column stand). The base of the stand is circular and connected to a handle in the shape of a hooded cobra.



Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 30.

16. *Pancharati deepa*. Brass. South India.
19th century. Old acquisition
(see note no. 25), 1955.
Height 8.8 cm, width 9.8 cm, depth 14 cm.
Inv. No. 18 543 and 18 544
(Height 7 cm, width 8 cm, depth 11.9 cm).

Two almost identical ritual lamps with five oil bowls and a special bowl for burning camphor that is situated in the middle of a platform in the shape of a cusped arch with a trefoil-like top. The base of the stand is circular, the handle is decorated with a hooded cobra. These lamps are executed in a finer manner than the previous one, inv. No. A 14 228.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 26 and 30.



17. *Pancharati deepa*. Brass. South India.
19th century. Acquired by J. J.
Herberstein, 1880's.
Height 4.5, width 9.2 cm,
depth 11.5 cm.
Inv. No. LB 186
(Chateau Libochovice).

Ritual lamp with five oil bowls. The bow-like handle is connected to two circular stands – one at the front and one at the back. Both are connected by a brass stick. In the middle of the platform with the oil bowls is a mount in a shape that is difficult to identify, but likely to be snakes' heads.



18. *Pancharati deepa*. Brass. South India.
19th century. Old acquisition
(see note no. 25)1955.
Height 11.3 cm, width 6 cm, depth 1.2 cm.
Inv. No. 18 546.

Ritual lamp in the shape of cobras. Above the three cobras hoods are holes where cotton slivers dipped in ghee are inserted and lit when the lamp is being used in the light ritual in front of a deity. The bow-like handle is connected to two circular stands – one at the front and one at the back. Both are connected by a brass stick.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 32 and 35.



19. *Arati deepa*. Brass. South India.
19th century. Bought from antique shop,
1984.
Height 6.5 cm, depth 10.5 cm,
diameter of bowl 3.8 cm.
Inv. No. 57 330.

Ritual lamp with a single bowl on a lotus stand with a bow-like handle. It is connected to two circular stands – one at the front and one at the back. Both are connected by a brass stick.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 6.



20. *Arati deepa*. Brass. Said to be from South India. 18th – 19th century. Origin unknown, as is the year when it came to the Náprstek Museum.

Height 23 cm, width of arch 9.5 cm, depth 24 cm, diameter of base 5.2 cm.
Inv. No. 14 526.

This elaborate ritual lamp depicts *Surya*, the Sun God, in his carriage with seven horses, driven by Aruna, his driver, with a sword in his right hand. *Surya* sits on an altar supported with columns, two of which are decorated with the feet of the god *Vishnupada* and a bow. The flame arch has the *kirtimukha* on the top. The carriage sits on a bow-like handle with two circular stands – one at the front and one at the back. Both are connected by a brass stick. The oil bowl that probably sat on the top of the altar has been broken and lost. This extraordinary lamp is well executed.



21. *Arati deepa*. Brass. Probably Nepal. Early 20th century. Transferred from a regional museum, 1953.

Height 12.7 cm, width 4.5 cm, depth 12.3 cm.

Inv. No. A 14 281 and inv. No. A 14 282 that is almost identical but smaller (height 8 cm, width 3 cm, depth 9.8 cm), with a black patina. Ritual oil lamp in the shape of a lion, the body of which serves as a container for oil that was filled through the rounded hole on the top of the head. The tip of the wick is meant to peep out of the pipe held in the lion's mouth. The tail is curved and serves as a handle.

It is difficult to say precisely where these two zoomorphic ritual lamps came from but Nepal is probable because of the motif and the way it is executed.



22. *Naga kumbha deepa*. Brass. Nepal.
Late 19th century. Bought from
an antique shop, 1993.
Height 20.2 cm, diameter of stand 10.5 cm.
Inv. No. A 20 305.

This votive lamp is made in the shape of a pot that holds the oil. It is decorated with a serpent motif. A *nagini* or hooded cobra serves as a curved handle. The oil bowl in front is guarded by *Ganesha*. This is a typical votive lamp used in Nepalese temples for the *arati* ritual.

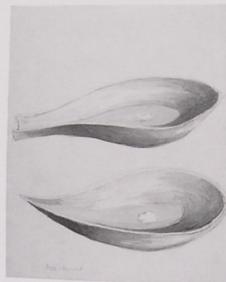


23. *Arati deepa*. Brass. India (no specific place mentioned) 1870s. Gift of Josefa Náprstková, 1878. Collection of Otokar Feistmantel (see note no. 18)
Depth 5.5 cm, width 4 cm, height 1.5 cm.
Inv. No. 11 508.

Votive oil lamp in the shape of an oval pointed spoon. These simple votive bowl-like lamps are very popular and represent the most common type of oil lamp used for any occasion that needs lighting by a single lamp or by hundreds, depending on the situation.³¹



23b. Drawing of the lamp and another lamp of this kind by Otokar Feistmantel. Náprstek Museum Library, Otokar Feistmantel's Archive, No.2/283



³¹ See note no. 24.

24. *Arati deepa*. Brass, tin and black lacquer.
India, said to be from Uttar Pradesh,
Moradabad. 1870s. Probably collection of
Otokar Feistmantel.³²

Width 3.5 cm, depth 10.5 cm, diameter of
stand 4.8 cm.

Inv. No. 11 481.

Votive lamp in the shape of a bowl
on a small rounded stand and with a
circular handle made of brass, tinned
and decorated with an all-over arabesque
decoration. The background is filled with
black lacquer of organic origin. This kind
of item manufactured in Moradabad are
reminiscent of the famous *bidri* wares.
They were popular, because they had
the appearance of luxury items but were
cheaper.



25. *Arati deepa*. Votive oil lamp. Brass.
Uttar Pradesh, probably Varanasi. Early 20th
century. Gift of a private individual, 1937.

Height 3.6 cm, depth 12.6 cm,
diameter 8.2 cm.

Inv. No. 31 884.

Votive oil lamp in the shape of a bowl with
a flattened base, a spout pointing forwards
a handle in the shape of a cobra. The chased
all-over decoration of stylized plants makes
Varanasi likely as a place of origin.



³² Some of Otokar Feistmantel's items may be identified only by comparison to other parts of his collections. The Museum Register sometimes mentions the year the item came to the Náprstek Museum and through whom (in the case of Feistmantel's collection mostly "gift of Josefa Náprstková") but do not mention Feistmantel's name.

26. *Arati deepa*. Brass. India, said to be from Maharashtra, Bombay. 1960s. Gift of a private person who bought it in India, early 1960s.

Height 5.5 cm, diameter of bowl 7 cm, diameter of stand 3.8 cm.

Inv. No. A 1 892.

A simple bowl-like lamp standing on a short and narrow column-like stand fixed in a rounded hemispherical stand. The rim of the oil bowl is scalloped, the spout and the little flat handle projected on opposite sides of the rim.



C. Standing lamps

27. *Nandi deepa*. Brass. South India. Early 20th century. Old acquisition (see note no. 25), 1948.

Height 8 cm, diameter of the oil bowl 4.5 cm, stand 2.5 x 4.5 cm.

Inv. No. 46 394..

The bull *Nandi* slides into the grooved base. A bowl-like oil reservoir with a projecting spout is fixed on the pipe-like stand on the bull's back.



28. Finial of a stand (?) lamp. Brass.
Probably Rajasthan or Northern India.
18th – 19th century. Bought from an
industrial company, 1979.
Height 17.5 cm, width 13.5 cm,
depth 13 cm.
Inv. No. 46 361.

A bird, serving as a reservoir for oil,
probably a parrot, with a full breast is
decorated with a necklace and engraved
arabesque decoration on its back and a
feather-like design on its wings and belly.
One of the wings and the tail are broken
and lost. This bird finial represents one
of the most beautiful zoomorphic metal
sculptures, in the plump and rounded style
typical of the Indian artistic tradition.

Compare: Zebrowski, M., 1997, pls. Nos.
93-95; Kelkar, D.G., pl. No. 85.



29. Finial of a stand (?) lamp. Brass. South
India. 19th century. Brass. South India.
19th century. Acquired by J. J. Herberstein,
1880's.
Height 16.5, width 8.5 cm, depth 15.5 cm.
Inv. No. LB 3378 (Chateau Libochovice).

Finial in the shape of *hamsa*, a mythical
bird, serving as a reservoir for oil. The
spout to drip the oil to the basin is on the
lower part of the full breast. It is decorated
with engraved feather-like design on its
wings and belly. The tail and the beak
are decorated with curving open work
decoration. Like the previous one, this
bird finial is one of the most beautiful
zoomorphic metal sculptures, in the plump
and rounded style typical in this case of the
South Indian artistic tradition.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 49 and 93
and Jain, J., 2000, p. 65, pl. No. 80.



30. Stand-lamp. Brass. Northern India. Beginning of the 20th century. Transferred from a regional museum, 1955. Height 19.4 cm, diameter of stand 7.6 cm, diameter of upper part 9 cm. Inv. No.31 820.

Seven-wicked standing oil lamp for domestic use, cast in fluting form. The base is rounded and shaped like a bowl with slightly averted rim. There is an unfinished inscription in *devanagari* script. Another comparable piece is inv. No 31 819. Stand-lamp. Brass. Northern India. Early 20th century. Transferred from a regional museum, 1955. Height 14 cm, diameter of stand 5.5 cm, diameter of upper part 7.2 cm. Five-wicked standing oil lamp for domestic use, cast in fluted form. The base is rounded.



31. Stand-lamp. Brass. India, said to be from Mangaluru, Munhi village. 1950's. Gift of a private individual, 1963. Height 9.8 cm, diameter of stand 5.5 cm. Inv. No. A 1 891.

A solid brass votive lamp for five wicks with a bud-like finial in the centre of the upper bowl. The fluted stand rises up from a rounded base shaped like a bowl.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 60.



32. Stand-lamp. Brass. South India. 1980's.
Gift of a private individual, 1987.
Height 10.3 cm, diameter of stand 5.5 cm,
diameter of upper part 5 cm.
Inv. No. A 18 215.

A solid brass votive lamp with a rounded oil bowl that has a central finial projecting prominently in the centre of the oil bowl. The fluted stand rises up from a rounded base.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 60.



33. Stand-lamp. Brass. South India. Second half of the 20th century. Bought from the antique shop, 1990.
Height 27.5 cm, diameter of stand 7.8 cm.
Inv. No. A 20 371.

Stand-lamp with seven-wicked bowl and a swan in the middle of the bowl at the top of the lamp. The fluted stand rises up from the double rounded base. The plump curves of the birds are in the taste of Indian tradition as depicted e.g. in eighteenth-century paintings³³.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pls. Nos. 49 and 53.
Zebrowski, M., 1997, pls. Nos. 102-105.



³³ Zebrowski, M., 1997, p. 101.

34. Stand-lamp. Brass. India, said to be from Rajasthan. 1950's. Gift by All India Handicrafts Board, 1958.

Height 59 cm, diameter of bowl 4.5 cm, ground 11.5 x 11.5 cm.

Inv. No. 31 923.

Peacock standing lamp with a high stand on a square base with four legs and a small five-wick bowl on the top of an artistic curve rising up from the peacock's head. It is a modern article that uses the traditional form and details, but the resulted stylisation looks disproportional.



35. Stand-lamp. Brass. Nepal. Early 20th century. Bought from Joe Hloucha³⁴.

Height 170 cm, diameter of stand 45 cm.

Inv. No. 32 555.

Ganesha lamp of standing variety with an arched handle. The tip of the wick is meant to peep out of the mouth of the mouse, *Ganesha* vehicle.³⁵

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pls. Nos. 63 and 80.



³⁴ Joe Hloucha (1881–1957), private collector and writer, a great devotee of Japanese culture. His collection, mostly from Japan, includes about eight thousands items.

³⁵ For more on Nepalese lamps in the Náprstek Museum see the author's article mentioned in note No. 9 above.

36. Stand-lamp. Brass. Nepal. 19th century.
 Acquisition by J. J. Herberstein, 1880's.
 Height 93.5 cm, diameter of bowl 14 cm,
 diameter of stand 27 cm.
 Inv. No. LB 3386 (Chateau Libochovice).

Ganesha lamp of standing variety. It is not as tall as the previous one. Another difference is the standing position of *Ganesha*, guarded by five hooded cobras on the top of the arched handle. *Ganesha*'s four arms carry his attributes. The column-like stand is made in parts and decorated with the open work floral decoration. The ground is rounded, as well as the oil pan, decorated with leaf-like pendants.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., 1961, pls. Nos. 9, 59 and 63.



37. Stand lamp. Brass. India, Maharashtra or South India. 19th century. Acquired by J. J. Herberstein, 1880's.
 Height 47 cm, stand 12 x 15.5 cm.
 Inv. No. LB 3374/1-3 (original number of upper part is LB 224; Chateau Libochovice).

This stand lamp is made in four parts: first, an oblong ground part with curved feet decorated with parrots; second, the figure of an elephant and a rider with folded hands and a pointed cup. The elephant is decorated with an engraved design of flowers and birds and with a rope with bells tied at intervals round its neck. The elephant holds a branch in his trunk. The third, middle part is an open work medallion decorated with two peacocks executed in mirror composition and with two figures of *hamsa* on both sides. Fourth, a finial in the shape of *deepalakshmi* with her hand folded in front of her body to hold the oil bowls (usually five, see e.g. Figs. Nos. 10 and 11) that are missing.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., 1961, pls. Nos. 61, 73 and 74.



38. Stand-lamp. Brass. South India. 1950'.
Gift of All India Handicrafts Board, 1958.
Height 94 cm, diameter of drip pan 32 cm,
diameter of oil pan 18 cm, diameter of
small oil pans 12,5 cm.
Inv. No. 31 924.

This massive stand lamp with a circular drip pan is cast in parts. There are four smaller oil pans on four branches fixed on the central column-like stand. The main oil pan is in the upper part of the stand below the circular finial decorated with four peacocks – two are a part of the circle itself and two sit on its rim. The pendants that decorated the lower part of the oil pan are missing.



39. Stand-lamp. Brass. South India. 1950'.
Gift of All India Handicrafts Board, 1958.
High 10.8 cm, width 10 cm, depth 11 cm,
diameter of bowl 7.5 cm.
Inv. No. 31 920.

Lamp in the shape of a bowl with a projecting spout decorated with two buds on its rim. The back is shaped like a throne with a prominent bud on the top. A *Vishnu* symbol is executed in relief in the middle of the back.



40. *Jyoti deepa*. Brass. South India. 1950's. Gift of All India Handicrafts Board, 1958. Height 11.5 cm, width 7.3 cm, depth 41.5 cm, diameter of stand 8.8 cm. Inv. No. 31 936.

This lamp in the shape of a vessel with a prominent flat platform on the top of the body is used to light other lamps and to furnish them with oil.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 113 and Jain, J., 2000, p. 67, pl. No. 82.



41. *Jyoti deepa*. Brass. South India. 19th century. Acquired by J. J. Herberstein, 1881's. Height 6 cm, width 21.5 cm, diameter of stand 5.4 cm, diameter of vessel 4.8 cm, length of chain 7 cm. Inv. No. LB 185 (Chateau Libochovice).

This lamp in the shape of a vessel with a prominent flat platform on the top of the body is used to light other lamps and to furnish them with oil (see the previous Fig. No. 40). Compared to the previous item, donated to the Náprstek Museum in the 1950's, this lamp is highly authentic. It was probably in use for a certain period. A spoon suspended on a chain and connected to the reservoir has been fortunately preserved.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 113 and Jain, J., 2000, p. 67, pl. No. 82.



D. Ordinary standing lamps of *arati* and *sandhya* type from India, Orissa

42. *Arati deepa*. Brass. Said to be from Orissa or Bihar. 1980's. Bought from a private individual, 1983.

Height 3.5 cm, depth 10 cm, diameter of bowl 5.8 cm, diameter of stand 2.8 cm.

Inv. No. 57 294.

Votive oil lamp in the shape of a bowl with a low rounded stand and with a projecting spout decorated with two buds on the rim. The handle projects on the opposite side of the bowl than the spout. The rim is decorated with a perforated leaf or *shankha*. Almost identical are two lamps. The first, inv. No. 57 293 (height 8.5 cm, depth 9.5 cm, diameter of bowl 6 cm) has a stand shaped like a column situated in the middle of a rounded and perforated base decorated with strips radiating like the sun's rays. The second, inv. No. 29 632 (height 5.5 cm, depth 10 cm, diameter of bowl 5.5 cm, diameter of stand 6 cm). The handle of this lamp is decorated with three spirals.



43. *Sandhya deepa*. Lamp and incense burner. Brass. Said to be from Orissa. 1980s. Bought from antique shop, 1987. Height 18 cm, width 6 cm, depth 15.5 cm. Inv. No. A 18 124.

This is a temporary *dhokra*³⁶ brass elephant lamp of a common type from Orissan households. The figure of *Lakshmi* (with four hands), supporting an auspicious *lota*, sits on the top of the elephant. The oil bowl held by the elephant trunk is of trefoil shape. *Lakshmi* holds two smaller oil bowls in her lower hands. The lamp is decorated with pendants, some of which are lost. A further two lamps of this type are similarly shaped (except that the goddess *Lakshmi* has only two hands). The first is inv. No. A 18 115 (height 19.3 cm, width 8 cm, depth 14 cm, diameter of bowl 4.2 cm. Bought from antique shop, 1986). The second is inv. No. A 18 319 (height 15.5 cm, width 7.5 cm, depth 12.5 cm, diameter of bowl 3.5 cm. Bought from antique shop in 1988). Compare: Bussabarger, R. F., 1968, p. 83



44. *Sandhya deepa*. Brass. Said to be from Orissa or Bihar. 1970s. Bought from a private individual, 1981. Height 9.5 cm, diameter of bowl 10 cm, diameter of stand 7.5 cm. Inv. No. 29 634.

Votive oil lamp in the shape of a bowl perforated in the upper part and with a rim shaped like a stylized flower and decorated with one bud at the point where the bow-like handle is attached. The column-like stand is situated in the middle of a rounded base decorated with two perforated horizontal lines.



³⁶ *Dhokra* casting as a folk craft is not exclusive to Orissa but it is found in Bengal, Bihar and Madhyapradesh as well. Das, H. C., 1987, p. 212.

45. *Sandhya deepa*. Brass. Said to be from Orissa. 1970s. Bought from a private individual, 1981.

Height 17 cm, depth 13.5 cm, diameter of bowl 9.5 cm, diameter of stand 8 cm.

Inv. No. 29 635.

A typical Orissan votive lamp, the wick-pan of which rests on a composite lotus flower stand (one leaf is missing) with a rounded base. The S-shaped handle is fixed to the stand. The rim of the oil bowl is decorated with two buds. On the opposite side there are traces of bird feet that have been broken and lost. The projecting spout is decorated with a trefoil pendant made of spirals.



Compare: Jain, J., *Utensils*, p. 37, pl. No. 68.

46. *Sandhya deepa*. Brass. Said to be from Orissa. 1980s. Bought from an antique shop, 1986.

Height 9.2 cm, depth 8.5 cm, diameter of bowl 7 cm, diameter of stand 4 cm.

Inv.No.A 18 116³⁷.

Votive lamp in the shape of a rounded vessel on a low circular stand, with two ring-like handles connected together. The elongated spout with a pipe finial for the wick is decorated with a peacock. The all-over decoration of linear patterns has been created by wax-thread technique, which is a common kind of decoration with lost wax (*cire perdue*) casting.



³⁷ For the alloy composition see the Appendix, fig. 2.

47. Lamp stand. Brass. Said to be from Bihar. 1880s. Bought from Cyril Purkyně, the heir of Otokar Feistmantel, 1960. Height 17,5 cm, width of tail 10,5 cm, diameter of stand 5 cm. Inv. No. 43 595³⁸.

This wonderful *dhokra* lamp stand in the shape of a peacock standing on a rounded bulging base is executed in open work technique, as well as the prominently-projecting tail of the peacock. The beak is decorated with a spiral pendant. A thorn on the back of the bird probably served for fixing an oil bowl that is now lost.



E. Hanging Chain Lamps

48. Votive chain lamp. Brass. South India. 1950s. Gift from All India Handicrafts Board, 1958. Height 59 cm, depth, diameter of oil reservoir 32.9 cm. Inv. No. 13 409.

Hamsa deepa, the eternal lamp which illuminates the inner sanctuary of the temple, with a swan on the top and a globular reservoir for oil below that feeds the wick in the lower spouted dish with a lid. There is a hook on the back of the *hamsa* for hanging.

Compare: Zebrowski, M., 1997, pls. Nos. 102-105 which are reminiscent of this kind of lamp from South India in 17th – 18th century. Kelkar, D.G., 1961, pl. No. 93.



³⁸ For the alloy composition see the Appendix, fig. 3.

49. Chain lamp. Brass. Central India, said to be from Rajasthan. 19th century. Bought from a private individual, 1988. Height 11.5 cm, width 7 cm depth 11 cm. Inv. No. A 19 774.

Sparrow-shaped hanging lamp cast in two pieces, a head with a pipe for the wick and the body on three feet with a hook on the back of the bird serving as a reservoir for oil. This is a nice example of another zoomorphic lamp in the shape of a plump bird that is so typical of the Indian tradition.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., 1961, pl. No. 84. See also fig. No. 31 above.



50. Chain lamp. Brass. Said to be from West Bengal. Early 20th century. Old acquisition, 1950s. Height 17.3 cm, diameter of ground 14 cm, chain length 31.5 cm. Inv. No. 18 548.

The inv. No. 18 547 is almost identical, only smaller, and it is of the same origin. (Height 14.8 cm, diameter of base 10.6 cm, chain length 42 cm). These seven-wicked lamps on a short pedestal with a round base are reminiscent of comparable standing lamps with a projecting finial in the centre of the oil pan (see fig. No. 32 above). The hanging lamps have a hook on the top on which to fix a chain.



51. Chain lamp. Brass. South India. 1950s.
Gift from All India Handicrafts Board, 1958.
Height 28 cm, diameter of drip pan 25 cm,
diameter of oil bowl 20 cm,
chain length 75 cm.
Inv. No. 31 921ab.

This seven-wicked lamp on a short pedestal in the middle of a drip pan made in two parts has a projecting finial in the centre of the oil pan in the shape of a bud. It serves to attach a chain with a pear like eye decorated around the rim with a spiral design.

Compare with the previous fig. No. 50 that was made more than fifty years earlier.



52. Hanging lamp. Brass. Probably Nepal.
Second half of 20th century. Bought from
a private individual, 1981. Length 133 cm.
Inv. No. 57 191.

This particular lamp in the shape of a chain is roughly executed. However, it is interesting for the motifs on it. It includes pairs of figures of Conghapa, *bodhisattvas*, heads of Buddha with two faces, *deepalakshmis*, and hollow and perforated truncated cones. There are hooks at both ends. The syncretic character of details that symbolise both the Hindu and Buddhist religions makes Nepal a place of origin more probable than India, mentioned in the Náprstek Museum's inventory.



53. Hanging lamp. Iron. India, said to be from Rajasthan, Jodhpur. Early 20th century. Bought from a private individual, 1986. Height 51,5 cm, width 36 cm. Inv. No. A 18 022.

This hanging lamp differs from most of the museum's lamps in that it was forged from iron. It is in the shape of an arch with scalloped rim and six hooks for pendants (some of them are missing). The inner space of the arch is divided by three horizontal lines and one vertical line in the shape of a ladle that serves as an oil bowl. The lamp is decorated with animals, pairs of peacocks, elephants and lions executed in mirror composition. This kind of lamp is used during wedding ceremonies.

Compare: Fischer, E. and Shah, H., 1970, pl. 173 depicting a comparable but square item.



F. Hanging "Mughal" Lamps

54. Hanging lamp. Brass sheet. India, said to be from Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi. Early 20th century. Gift from a private individual, 1921. Height 35 cm, diameter of body 9.5 cm. Inv. Nos. A 873 and A 874 (a pair of identical lamps).

"Mughal-type" lamps are decorated with fine perforated geometric designs. The lamp has an oval body made in pieces, the upper and lower part are domed. The lower part, finished with a projecting bud-like finial, is decorated with medallions depicting Hindu deities.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 95. Nautiyal, K. C., p. 97.



55. Hanging lamp. Brass sheet. India, said to be from Rajasthan, Jaipur. Early 20th century. Transferred from a regional museum, 1984. Height 51,5 cm (with chain), diameter 18.5 cm. Inv. No. A 15 108.

This chain-hung, hexagonal Mogul lamp is decorated with a fine perforated geometric design. It has six *mihrab*-shaded openings in the hexagonal *pattis* (frames). The lamp is mounted with the perforated spherical top fixed on a column.

Compare: Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 95. Nautiyal, K. C., p. 97.



56. Hanging lamp. Brass sheet. India, said to be from Delhi. 1950s. Gift from All India Handicrafts Board, 1958. Height 49 cm, diameter 12.2. cm. Inv. No.13 407.

This tubular hanging lamp made in pieces and finished with a pointed part on both sides is decorated with a perforated flower design. This shape is not considered a traditional one, and it is more reminiscent of a *pandan*, a box for betel leaves, than a lamp.



57. Hanging lamp. Brass sheet. India, said to be from Delhi. Early 20th century. Bought from a private individual, 1984.

Diameter 16.5 cm.

Inv. No. A 15 064.

Globular, perforated lamp featuring horizontal bands of floral design that “were mainly used in mosques, but became popular far and wide as a part of the Islamic legacy”³⁹ reminiscent of the gyroscopic lamps of the Mughal court that were used by ladies as balls when playing at night.

Compare: Nautiyal, K. C., p. 98. Kelkar, D. G., pl. No. 96



³⁹ Jain, J., *Utensils*, p. 53.

Dictionary

Hindi	English
Arati	ritual of light, the lamp itself
Archana	offering
Chirag	lamp
Chiragdan	gift of light, lightening the lamp in front of a deity
Choli	bodice, top
Deepa, pradeepa, diya	light, lamp
Deepalakshmi, deepika	lamp in shape of a young woman
Deepdan	see <i>chiragdan</i>
Dhokra	technique of decoration of the surface by wax threads before casting
Ghagra	skirt
Jyoti	light, storm, flame, fire, sun
Saree	women's dress
Sandhya	night
Satphula	"seven blossoms"
Sham	night
Shamdan	"gift of night", lamp
Stambha	column, pillar
Sudarshan	beautiful

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All photographs by Jiří Vaněk.

Appendix

X-Ray Fluorescence Analysis (XRFA) of selected metal items from the collection of the Náprstek Museum

by Petr Průša

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Fig. 1. Oil lamp

Item inv. No.	Composition in %		
Fig. No. 13	Cu	Zn	Pb
13 547	92,9	0	6,8

Alloy of copper and tin that makes it harder and easier to process. This composition is comparable to some ancient European bronzes.

Fig. 2. Oil lamp

Item inv. No.	Composition in %		
Fig. No. 46	Cu	Zn	Pb
A 18 116	67,5	31,4	0,8

This lamp is made of brass. The alloy includes traces of tin that makes the technical qualities of the alloy better.

Fig. 3. Lamp stand

Item inv. No.	Composition in %		
Fig. No. 47	Cu	Zn	Pb
43 595	71,6	25,3	2,8

This lamp is made of brass. The alloy includes traces of tin that makes the alloy harder.

Table: Element Composition

Item inv. No.	Composition in %		
	Cu	Zn	Pb
Fig. No. 13: 13 547	71,6	25,3	2,8
Fig. No. 46: A 18 116			
Fig. No. 47: 43 596			



Pl. No.1. Miniature painting. *Raga deepaka*. India, Rajasthan, Mevar school, late 17th or early 18th century. Gouache on paper. Measurements: 33.3 cm x 25.8 cm. Inv. No. A 18 001.



Pl. No.2. Votive painting. India, probably Rajasthan, early 20th century. Gouache on paper. Measurements: 25.5 x 17.4 cm. Inv. No. A 20 177.