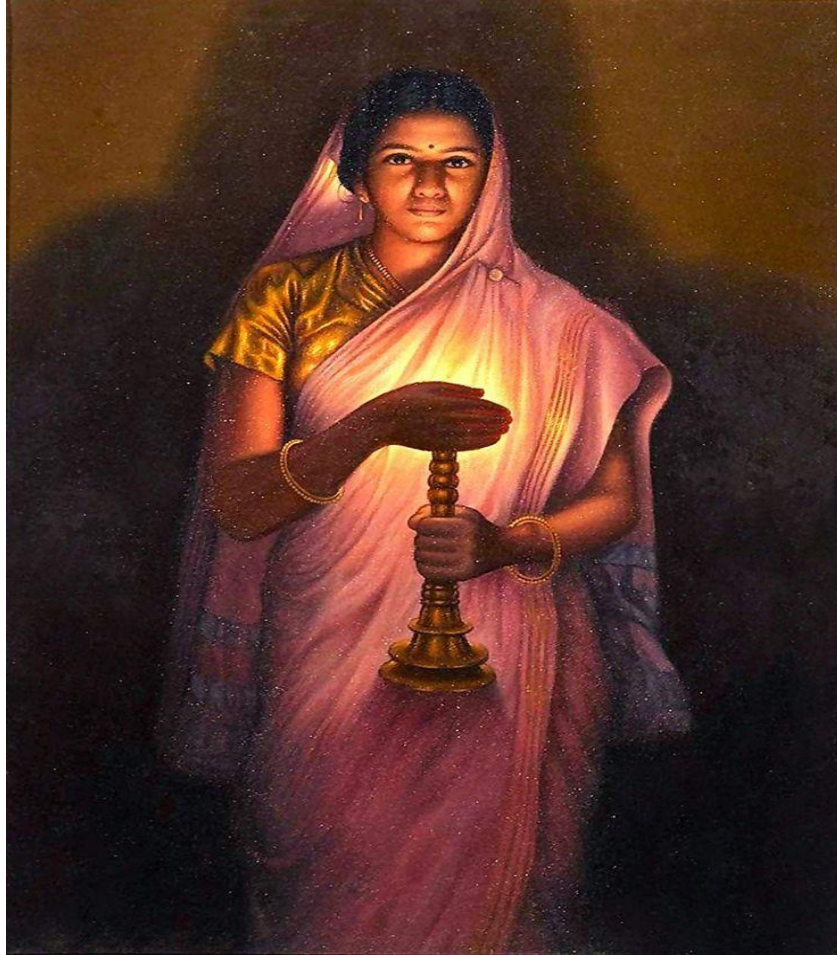


Critical Review on “The Lady with a Lamp” (Glow of Hope) by S.L. Haldankar



“The Lady with a Lamp” (Glow of Hope-1) by SL Haldankar

“**The Lady with a Lamp**” is a famous Indian painting by **Sawlaram Lakshman Haldankar** that is considered to be his’ greatest watercolor masterpiece. The painting is also referred to as the “**Glow of Hope**” and the “**Woman with the Lamp**”. It was painted around 1945-46 and currently hangs on the walls of **Jaychama Rajendra Art Gallery** at the Jagmohan Palace in Mysore, Karnataka, one of the largest princely states of India.



Sawlaram Lakshman Haldankar, Indian Painter

Sawlaram Lakshman Haldankar was born in Savanatawadi district of Maharashtra. From an early age he showed his concerns towards artistry which later encouraged him to pursue its graduation in the famous **Sri JJ School of Arts located in Mumbai**. He was the founding president of his own art academy called Art School of India.

Currently, there are various types of paintings that denote themselves as the Lady with the Lamp. But the first “Lady with a Lamp” was painted by S.L. Haldankar. This painting is a demonstration of traditional India that celebrated Diwali, the festival of lights. The beauty of a painting moralizes the eternity expressed with its highest format with all senses and reason to bring the past alive. Haldankar like any other famous painter has its own palette of colors and vision to see beauty, the beauty that only comes suddenly and often striking.

It is interesting to note that this particular painter has given birth to three daughters along with his sons but never would have realized that one certain day he would carve ‘them’ into world-class paintings. I mentioned here “**them**” because it is not just one but two paintings painted by Haldankar based upon his second and young daughters upon the same theme. Strikingly, the painting called “The Lady with a Lamp” or say, “**Glow of Hope-1**” became of the outstanding artworks of India’s tradition and history.

The “**Glow of Hope-1**” or “The Lady with the Lamp” is a painting of **Gita Uplekar (nee Haldankar)**, standing with on a dark area with a large oil lamp holding in one hand, whereas

the other hand “wrapping the light/ fire” for preventing a blow out or extinguishing of the fire. She is young at a tender age of 12 wrapped carefully in a lilac-colored saree pinned at her left shoulder to pleat the upper sheathe. She has her head covered with the same saree in the form of a half veil that covered only her head and hung on her hair bun. Her left ear is hidden behind the drape and we can only see her right ear wearing a gold teardrop. Her partial visibility of the neck gives a glance of a tiny beaded chain but not sure whether she wore a pendant or not. Neither we are so sure it is just a gold chain or a wedding-auspicious necklace called ‘Mangalsutra’ in disguise but all we know is she was married then. She also wore a pair of thick gold bangles on her either arms.

According to several critics, her ornaments represented wealthy background that afforded substantial ornaments for a lady. My support to this statement is that her father and brothers did well with their lives during their lifetime. They were educated. Even her in-laws were known to be quiet wealthy and renowned persons of Kolhapur during the pre-independent India. This era literally drained off large percentage of wealth from India into the pockets of Colonialism. People had to leave back all their wealth so as to pay even the basic taxes. Affording even the basic amount of ornament on a woman’s body signified that the family was well occupied with powerful contacts and forums.



Lilac color (Hex triplet shade #DCDOFF)

Not only the jewels, but the lilac color is always recognized to be something royal or wealthy. The color is the slightest version of pink and purple, and a bit higher shade of the color ‘Gray Rose’. The color belongs to the Lavender family but it isn’t still the same. According to several

sources, both these colors share a medium or pale purple shade with the tinges of blue or pink. Such color doesn't belong to the primary or secondary palette and thus belong to the **Hex triplet shade #DCDOFF**. It is quite difficult and rare to extract such color and is therefore affordable to wealthy ones. Another reason why she was wealthy because the accurately imprinted borderlines on her saree and richly brass thick oil lamp genuinely spoke more about her as well the painter and his painting. The final reason was the steady flawless wall captured behind her. She was made to stand in front of the wall and it is definitely assured that though it was a dark room yet the walls had no visible cracks upon them. It may not be definitely distempered as of today's painting data, but this doesn't give an assurance that the painter tried to keep his walls wealthy. The color however, signified her gracefulness, simplicity, royalty, feminism, as well as natural beauty that didn't fancy with anything extraordinary.

From the very historical backgrounds of the painting, it is acknowledged that the lady though aged 12 during the painting was already married to a Jeweler of Kolhapur, Krishnakant Uplekar. It was the auspicious Diwali night, and Gita was busy making arrangements for lighting the house with 'diyas' or earthen lamps when suddenly her father, Haldankar saw her passing through a dark room holding the lamp who looked utterly brightening from the reflections of her well draped lilac saree and the illusion of shadow patterns that passed through her gaped finger while protecting the fire. The illumination was a throwback not only to the entire room but to the artistic visions of the painter's soul. The sight literally filled him with a joy and instantly decided to paint her with the watercolors without any mistake. He knew very well that a mistake caused in an oil painting can be restored but same was not the case with the watercolors.

Gita died at the age of 102 in the year 2018 but recollected the night in a public event how she stood continuously for three hours just to make her father sure he has imprinted the necessary outlines, graphs, and structure of her portrait. The most striking part of the painting is the enlarged shadow of her contrasting exactly upon the wall because of the lamp light. The silhouette was grand yet sharp with the shoulder areas because her drape was firmly fixed with a fancy buttoned safety pin. She got beautiful almond eyes with arc-shaped thin eyebrows. Her forehead was decorated with a small 'bindi' most probably of a red or maroon color. She wore a silky golden colored blouse and wore the saree in the form of **Nauvari**, the traditional Marathi form for draping the sarees. Her blouse covered her entire neck and back-piece that represented the conservative fashion of Indian society during the quick 1940's and 50's.

People often refer this masterpiece to the contributions of Indian legendary painter **Raja Ravi Varma**. Undoubtedly, he is one of the greatest Indian painters of the post-independent era. He also pursued his graduation in Fine Arts from the same Sri JJ School of Arts, Mumbai. It is likely seen that Varma also painted his daughter Mahaprabha and his sister-in-law Bharani

Thirunal Lakshmi Bayi, Senior Queen of Travancore and wife to his elder brother. Therefore, these are some common similarities found between Haldankar and Varma.

“[Glow of Hope-2](#)” is the other painting of S. L. Haldankar that falls under the same version/series of ‘Glow of Hope’. Where the first painting portrayed young Gita Uplekar nee Haldankar with a big brass oil lamp in her hands, the second portrait represented her older sister **Lilavati Uplekar nee Haldankar** with a similar dark room- oil lamp theme but this time, the lady seemed to adjust the wick of the hanging brass oil lamp in a dark room.



Glow of Hope-2 by SL Haldankar

Both these paintings belong to the same series notable for emitting the Glow of Hope from a centralized figure like a lamp that positions to throwback highlighted dramatical silhouettes in the backside and lighting up the faces of the two protagonists in the front. The portraits are simply culture and authentic to its taste of knowledge but known to speak a thousand words and tales.