



Arts

## **BLUE POTTERY OF JAIPUR**

**Dr Anjali Pandey** \*<sup>1</sup>

\*<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor & H.O.D. Drawing & Painting Department Government M.L.B. Girls P. G Autonomous College Bhopal, India

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### **Abstract**

The chalcolithic potteries, like Terracotta potteries with cylindrical pots and surahies, indicate the influence of West Asia and Iran.<sup>7</sup>

The art of glazed pottery have indigenous forms, designs and vibrant blue colour. Jaipur is widely recognized for the blue pottery having the Terko-Persian influence.<sup>8</sup> The objects of blue pottery are lamp sheds, crockery, Jewelry boxes, serving trays, flower vases, and bowls etc.

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### **1. Introduction**

“If the Industrial art and handicrafts of India reached a state of almost near perfection, the very fact that they have survived so long all the vicissitudes to which they must have been subjected, was no doubt greatly due to the encouragement afforded by the powerful and petty princes and rulers and the aesthetic inclinations of the common people.”<sup>1</sup>



Rajasthan has exquisite workmanship and artistry. Its rich heritage makes it the treasure home of Indian handicrafts. Ivory, metal, wood, leather, textile are some of the examples of its craftsmanship. The ceramic industry of Rajasthan also has specific space in Indian handicraft.

Jaipur is well known for its art work some of them are used for home de'cor while other is utilitarian. The artist and craftsman of Jaipur are expertise in making lac bangles, gems and metal jewelry, bandhej (Tie and Dye) block prints of Sanganer, miniature paintings marble



handicrafts, wooden furniture, puppets, mojaris, rugs and carpets and blue pottery. The blue pottery of Jaipur is known for its excellence throughout the world.<sup>2</sup> In Rajasthan the potter's art has been practiced almost continuously since 2000 B.C. The archaeological excavations at Kalibanga, Awra reveals the existence of terracotta Pottery akin to Harappan civilization. The potters are the ancient creator of earthen pot and icons.<sup>3</sup> A detail study of Iranian Pottery is not within the present scope; but only its principal characteristics and achievement have been attempted.<sup>4</sup>

Present day potters reveals the tradition of black designs on red or buff pots excavated from various sites. The excellent workman ship, rich designs and various surfaces of the potteries were made by clay.<sup>5</sup> Alwar's well known Kagzi Pottery, Kota's black pottery, Pokaran's red pottery and Bikaner's pottery with lacquer work and golden work has specialty of their own workmanship. According to Dr. Mortimer Wheeler, It was probably Rajasthan which supplied copper to Indus Valley people at one stage. The tradition of having black paintings on red surface of pottery in Bikaner region, survived up to the beginning of the Christian Era, as is quite evident from the excavations at Rangmahal. Some of these pottery designs are prevalent even today.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Historical Background

“The pattern craft traditions in India were to take and which were to survive for 5,000 years appear mature and firmly established in the cities of the Indus valley. The Craftsmen in these cities had

discovered the use of wheel and control of fire: this had transformed his methods of transport and the tools with which he moulded his clay pots.”<sup>9</sup>

The great flowering of craftsmanship was witnessed in the royal workshop. The Art of blue pottery was introduced and flourished with the establishment of Mughals in India.<sup>10</sup> The technique traveled to India with Turkeys in 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> From there it comes to Delhi via Kashmir and then it settled down at Jaipur in 17<sup>th</sup> century. Under the patronage of Maharaja Ram Singh II (1835-1880) some artisans went for the training to the Delhi. In 1866 when Jaipur art school established it grew up with the innovative and with the form of perfection.<sup>12</sup>

Pottery, ivory carving, enameling, and other crafts flourished in Mughal courts. Gradually the technique of the glaze pottery grew beyond its infancy period as an architectural ornamentation accessory. The craft was initially used for decorating Palace, mosque and mazars. The emphasis on design could be seen today.

### 3. Design



The Blue pottery is a combined art of China’s Glazing technique and Persian decorative skill. Today we can see a vast variety in this craft. Home and kitchen accessories like vases, crockery, ashtrays, coasters, boxes for trinkets, home de’core tiles, door knob, and key chain, lamp stands, mirror frames, photo frames, soap dishes, essence holders and games<sup>13</sup> are in market. The vibrant blue colour with white surface has flora and fauna motifs and the combination of geometric designs. According to the shape some of them are masterpieces of linear design. The variation of patterns seems in the creation of motifs. Geometrical forms- circles, ovals, squares, zigzag lines, cross-hatch, loops, chess design and so on, could be turned into infinite creative ornamental patterns and decorative designs gives exquisite patterns of endless variety with high aesthetic effect. The impact of the Jaipuri block prints and Sangneri prints could be seen on the designs.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Process of Making Blue Pottery

Today, the progress is gradually changing the resources, material, form, fiction and environment for the craftsman. It is an art not concern with imitation. The introduction of potter wheel made, the execution of greater degree of control in making of various shape as well as in coloring possible.

Since the beginning colours have stirred our emotions. White chalk was a precious tool in the hands of Paleolithic artists. Gold from the very first civilizations reminded us of the sun. A desire for the mysterious and exotic blue changed the course of history.

The four main steps which are involved in making of blue pottery are: (a) pottery making (b)designing and painting (c)glazing (d) firing

Pottery making- Potters of blue pottery, which they use as the ingredients for making the pottery are- Quartz stone, glass, Multani-mitti (fuller's earth), katira (Bunyan tree gum). The ingredients in fixed proportion are crushed and grind in powdered form to prepare the dough. Water is used for kneading. The mixture kept covered with the plastic bag. When the flour like material is formed, they made the chapatti from the dough with the help of thappi. Then they put in into the mould. For the certain shape, only neck and lip are shaped on potter's wheel. The edges of the chapatti are trimmed with knife.



To prevent from the deformation, the mould is filled with ash. When the material dries, the potterwheel and sand paper is used for giving it smoothness and finishing. The pottery is coated with the paste and dried in sun.

**Painting-** The designs are made on paper according to the shape of pot. Manually, and the potter's wheel is used to draw the design on dried and coated vessel. The cobalt oxide is applied to mark the outlines of designs. Squirrel hair brush is used for applying the colour. The colours used are, natural and made from coloured stone. Today no. of changes has been done, in coloring. Black, red, brown, yellow and green colours are introduced. Cobalt oxide is used for blue, copper sulphate for turquoise, iron oxides for brown, chromium oxide for green and cadmium oxide is used for yellow.<sup>15</sup>

**Glazing-** The pottery is coated with the paste consisting of glass, lead oxide, borax, potassium nitrate, zink oxide and boric acid. The mixture is melted in kiln and after cooling down the mixture is grinded and mixed with water and maida (edible flour). After coating the products are kept for heating.<sup>16</sup>

**Firing-** The traditional kiln is used for firing the product. The vessel are put in a hot kiln and kept for two to three days at the temperature of 800- 850 degree centigrade.<sup>17</sup> After 2 to 3 days the kiln cools down the products are removed.



The age old craft of blue glazed pottery has been passed from generation to generations while revising its design with the course of time.<sup>18</sup> The handicrafts of this art in Jaipur were continued by its patronage by the rulers, and the elite. The craft tradition is expressing itself in oral ballads in India. Shri Kripal Singh Shekhawat reintroduced this craft with some innovative experiments on designs and in colouring. The new shades of brown, black, green, yellow were introduced. The tradition of blue pottery epitomize centuries of evolutionary tradition and has acquired the new fame facing many challenges in its way.

“In India, however diverse the forms and multiple the objects produced by craftsmen for use of people in cities, in villages or for primitive man living in tribal society, the root of the creative process has always been the artisan tradition. To explore the roots of this tradition and to assess its place in the aesthetic and social life of the country it is necessary to examine the norms that have moulded the vision of the Indian craftsman and dictated his vocabulary.”<sup>19</sup>



FIGURES: Courtesy- [www.google .com](http://www.google.com)



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\*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [anjali\\_pandey11@yahoo.com](mailto:anjali_pandey11@yahoo.com)