

Design Resource

Blue Pottery - Jaipur, Rajasthan

Eye-Catching Blue Colored Pottery
by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and
Sandhya B.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/blue-pottery-jaipur-rajasthan-0>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
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Introduction

Blue Pottery is one of the well-known crafts of Jaipur. It was once a native craft of Persia that was brought to India by Mughals and later got patronized by Indian ruler (mostly Rajput). This blue pottery technique is an imported one. It is a mix of Chinese glazing technology with Persian decorative arts. Blue pottery caught the local people's interest and many started learning this craft soon, most of the Kumbhar (pottery) families also shifted from working on red clay to blue pottery later, on a larger scale. Eventually blue pottery craft flourished in and around Jaipur. Blue pottery has made its mark among few of other crafts in Jaipur. And one among those places where blue pottery is carried on is Sanganer.

Sanganer is a town-situated in Jaipur, the largest city of the Indian state of Rajasthan in northern India. It is 16kms south of Jaipur. It has been abode for blue pottery and other various handicrafts. Blue pottery has grown to an industry where it provides livelihood to many people. Though new designs are adapted to enhance the craft, artisans have also been keen on keeping their traditional ways. In blue pottery one can see the use of the dough in the place of clay. The dough is a mixture of quartz stone, powder glass, multani mitti, borax, gum and water. The Blue pottery gets its name from the blue dye that is used to color the pottery. The design patterns are mostly of floral, animal and birds motifs. Apart from usual urns that were made earlier, artisans have come up with tea sets, cups and saucers, glasses, jars, mugs, ashtrays and more. The tiles of blue pottery are an attraction and amazingly handcrafted products with supercool designs. Tiles can be arranged in numerous ways to create patterned floors and walls. There are endless possibilities and are eye catchy, these design patterns can be customized to any size accordingly.



Pile of plates that are ready for the design patterns to be drawn.

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Neck part of the vase placed on the base.



A girl holding pot picture made of glazed tiles.

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JAIPUR INDIA – trademark written below the cup.



A lovely glazed white elephant.



A row of painted and glazed, beautiful blue elephants.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools that are used in blue pottery are:

- **Molds:** Molds of desired designs and shapes are made of Plaster of Paris (POP) and used.
- **Knife:** Knife is used to cut the excess dough and remove unwanted dough after casting.
- **Potter's Wheel:** Potter wheel is used to attach the base.
- **Sandpaper:** Sand paper of different grains is used to smoothen the surface of product; generally artists use grit of 60, 100 and 180 numbers.
- **Broom:** A small broom made of husk is used to brush off the dust.
- **Brushes:** Various numbers from small size to medium-sized brushes are used to draw and fill in colors by the artisans.
- **Heating Kiln:** To dry the products heating kiln is used, (kiln is in circular shape to trap the heat evenly and cemented plates are used on which the products are kept, these plates are separated by terracotta stands. The kiln is closed from top and fired from below).
- **Flattening Tool:** A tool with flat base is used to flatten the dough.

The raw materials that are needed in the making of blue pottery are got from the local market and are as follows:

- **Quartz Stone:** Quartz is procured from nearby place. Quartz is white in color, one of the main raw materials, so it is bought in bulk.
- **Glass:** Scrap or broken pieces of glass (cullet) is used. The glass is first washed and then powdered to fine particles. It is sieved through cotton cloth to avoid big particles.
- **Katira Gond:** An edible gum something that of resin. Adhesive that is available in big pieces are grinded later using a grinding stone, bigger particles are removed by sieving.
- **Multani Mitti (Fuller's Earth):** It is available in solid lumps, which can be grounded later to fine powder & used.

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- **Saaji:** It is an edible soda available in the market.

- **Maida (Flour):** Maida acts as an adhesive and sometimes used as substitute in the place of multani mitti.

Colors:

Two main colors that are used in blue pottery are:

- Oxide and
- Ferro colors

The dominant colors used in Blue Pottery are:

- Dark Blue
- Light Blue
- Green
- Bright Yellow is obtained from Cadmium Oxide
- Brown – obtained from Ferro colors

Burnt Wood Dust:

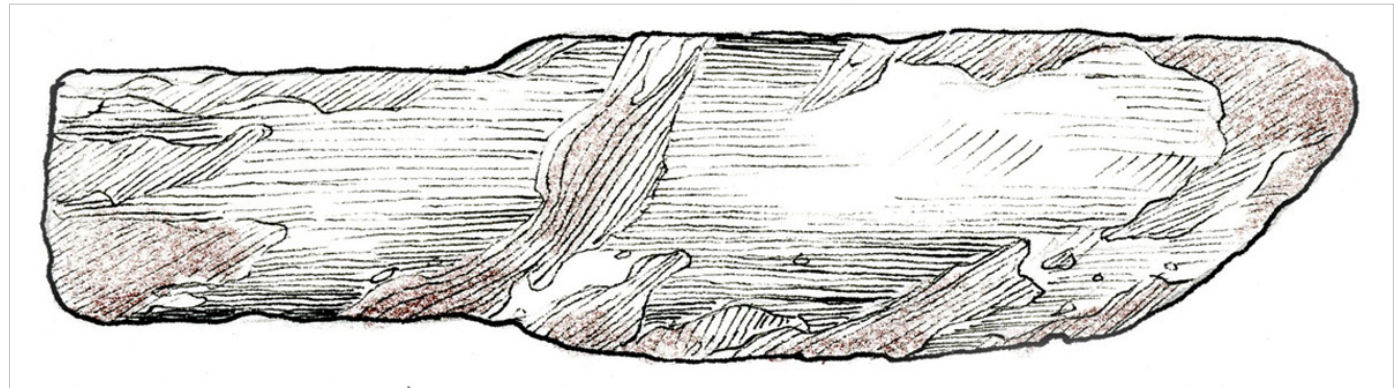
Burnt wood dust is used to give exact shape to the product when it is in a mold. It is non-sticky and can be easily brushed off once the product dries.

Wood:

For-firing purposes locally available wood is used.

Other ingredients used are:

Charcoal, Water, Borax powder, Zinc Oxide, Potassium nitrate, and Boric acid.



Iron knife to cut excess dough.

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Potter's wheel to form base for product like vase.



Brush of various sizes.

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Handmade thin brushes for the outline.



Heating kiln (Furnace)- to dry products to finished ones.

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Sand paper is used for smoothening the surface of the product.



Flattening tool, something that of a flat base to flatten dough.



Dough (mixture of kanch stone, katira gond, edible gum, fullers earth, soda bicarbonate, and flour in proper amount, forms the dough).



Colors - oxide colors and Ferro colors.

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Making Process

The making of blue pottery involves various steps and it's a long process.

Preparing the Dough:

Firstly the dough is prepared with raw materials like quartz powder (available in Jaipur and in powdered form), cullet (the small chunks of glass are washed first and are grinded later to make glass powder. It is sieved to avoid bigger particles.), saji, katira gond, and multani mitti are mixed together properly to a non-sticky dough and kept for few hours before using.

Making the Mold:

Molds are made from Plaster of Paris (POP). Molds are made of desired shapes and sizes, and then dried. To avoid breakings and due to limitations of the use of dough, it is casted in molds. One or two molds are used while making certain products, like for a vase - the castings are attached to each other with little dough and water. The molds if maintained properly can be used for more numbers of times.

Casting the Product:

A good amount of dough is flattened to a round roti like shape of approximate 1cm thickness with a flattening tool. The flattened dough is placed on mold and tucked in nicely to get the shape. The mold with dough in it is then filled with burnt wood dust and pressed gently so that dough takes the exact shape of the mold. The extra edge of dough that comes out of mold is cut using a knife. Mold is turned upside down and it is slowly removed. The product is left for drying for 1-2 days along with burnt wood dust in itself. Once the product dries the burnt wood dust is removed. With the small broom excess dust is brushed off from the product. Products like vases are provided with base to give them stability. The base is attached to the product with some amount of dough and sprinkled with water to make it leather hard. Once the product is completely done it is left for drying for 1-2 days.

Smoothening:

The rough edge of the product is smoothened by rubbing it on stone gently. After this, the product is rubbed with the sandpaper to remove grains and to make surface of product even. The finished product now has to be painted before which it undergoes another smoothening process. The product is coated with, dough mixed with water to fill the pores and later the product is dried and rubbed with sandpaper again. The same step is repeated for one more coat. After second round of smoothening the products are dipped in mixture of quartz powder, powdered glass, Maida (edible flour) and water. It is evenly coated and kept for drying. Once the product is dried it is rubbed with sandpaper evenly and made ready for painting.

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Painting:

The products are ready to get painted after the smoothening process is done. Artisans follow or sometimes come up with their own designs. All products are painted by hand. First the outlines are drawn with the fine brush or custom-made artist brush. If the product is circular shape then the outline is easy to give, product is just placed on potter's wheel and by touching the tip of brush to the product a neat line could be drawn. After the outlines, colors are filled in the spaces and that complete designs.

Colors:

The colors that are used are oxides and Ferro metal. The oxides will be available in the market. It is mixed with edible gum, which acts as a binding agent. Once done with outlines, it is then filled with colors.

Glazing:

A special glaze is prepared using different raw material like powdered glass, borax, zinc oxide, potassium nitrate, and boric acid. These raw materials are heated at a high temperature; melting point is reduced by borax. When everything is done, mixture is put to cold water to cool and it splits to splinters. Splinters are collected and then grounded. The grounded frit is mixed with water to form glaze, the coat of product should not be too thick or thin, and it should be evenly coated. Too thick will give matte finish and when it is too thin it will leave the pores exposed. The products are dipped in glaze and left for drying. Once it is dried its ready to get in furnace.

Firing:

The products are kept inside a furnace to dry. The products are properly stacked inside so that it doesn't touch each other. The kiln is closed from top and heating is done from below using wood and charcoal, and an even circulation of heat within the kiln is maintained by leaving the center core open for heat to move freely. The firing takes place for 4-5 hours and the firing has to be controlled to be gradual because changes in temperature might cause cracks in products. The kiln is left for cooling for 2-3 days and then products are taken out. The products are separated from the cracked ones, the final ones are cleansed and packed for the market.

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Bits of dough are made to a lump.



The lump is flattened with a flattening tool.



Flattened dough is placed on pop (Plaster of Paris) mold.

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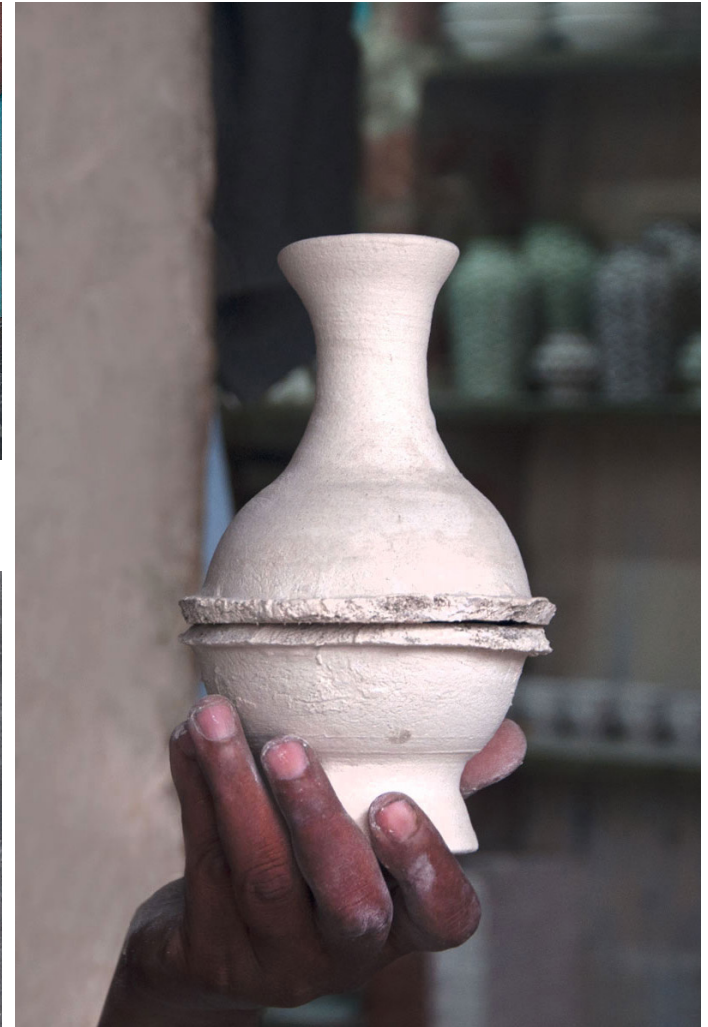
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Excess dough is cut of with iron knife.



Dough is filled with charcoal to retain shape of mold.



Pair of bowls after cleaning charcoal.

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Castings kept for drying.



Extra dough is put on the base part.



Potters wheel to form the base for the products.

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Attaching top and bottom parts of the product forms vase.



Line formed by extra dough is scrubbed off with sand paper and now vase is scrubbed all over and is ready for the outlines of design to be drawn.



Smoothing and removing extra dough.

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Close look on the lines drawn by the artist.



An artisan filling up design with color.



Pile of plates with floral motifs.

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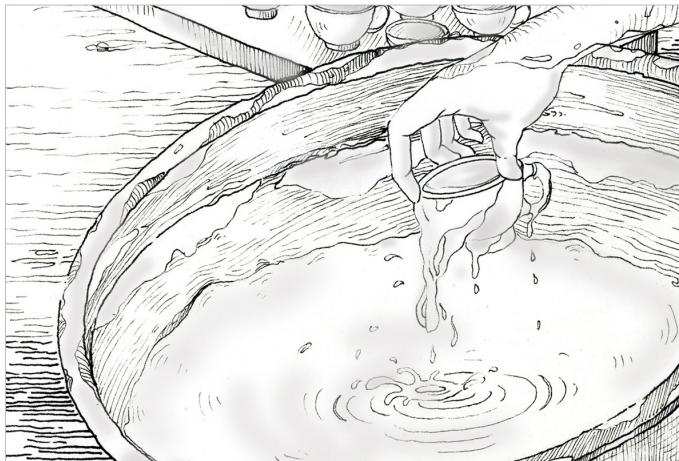
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Vases that are ready to be glazed.



Glazing the products.



Placing the products in furnace evenly without making them touch each other.

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Products

Initially blue pottery was to decorate temples and palaces. With new interventions we can see fusion of quality and style that coincides and new range of products are introduced. Today we can see all sorts of things in blue pottery. Products from plates, jars, bowls, soap dishes, frames, lampstands, ashtrays, flower vases, essence holders, beads, ear rings, knobs, hangers, cups and mugs, tea sets, glazed tiles, games and more are available.



Plates with various design patterns, hung on wooden wall.



Colorful knob.



Vases of variable shapes and designs.



Blue vases with lighter shade of green leaves.

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Glazed yellow pot with simple and attractive floral drawings.



Set of blue jars.



Beads of bright attractive colors.

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Blue tile with floral motifs.



Gold color beads with minute flower drawings.

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Decorative showpiece, looks more like a lamp stand.



Blue pottery store with collection of vases, cylindrical jars, small bowls, ashtrays, lamp stands, coasters, soap dishes, knobs, plates, beads, and decorative wall hangings.



Blue pottery store with a different view.

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