

Design Resource

Chunar Red Clay Pottery - Mirzapur

The Art of Handling of Clay

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Aakash Sharma

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/chunar-red-clay-pottery-mirzapur>



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Introduction

Chunar cluster is able to form above 200 artisans and 20 self-help assemblies supporting the durable work force. The organization gains momentum day by day. A cluster is well defined as a geographic attentiveness (a city/town/few adjacent villages and their adjoining areas) of units producing near similar merchandises and facing common opportunities and threats. An artisan cluster is defined as geographically concentrated (mostly in villages/townships) household components producing handicraft/handloom merchandises. In a typical cluster, such manufacturers often belong to a traditional community, producing the long-established products for generations. Certainly, many artisan clusters are centuries old artisan.

Like all other handiworks and techniques, the tradition of pottery crafting in India is very old. The prehistoric pottery of a country speaks dimensions about its civilization. Pottery is one of those significant mediums through which men have expressed their sentiments. For thousands of years pottery art has been one of the most attractive forms of expression. A piece of pottery has a visual message in its shape and pigment.

Open firing techniques were used to manufacture the earliest pottery. Through this technique, temperatures could range from approximately 600 to about 800-900 degrees Celsius, which are comparatively low temperatures. Pottery is the most sensual of all arts. In India, we have had a great institution of pottery making. In fact, being an agricultural country, pots for storage of water and grains were in demand. The real commencement of Indian pottery began with the Indus Valley Civilization and the art of determining and baking clay articles as pottery, earthenware and porcelain has continued through the ages.

The craft was well sophisticated. Rectangular oven for firing the product were in use. Seals and grain and water containers were made that were put to use effectively. The potter dominates a unique position in the craft civilizations of India. The art of handling of clay is called Pottery and it is one of the earliest skills known to the Indians. The Indians are expert in molding clay with their hands to form various shapes.

The terracotta art with its long and uninterrupted history of the preceding centuries has imbibed such principles, which are based upon a thorough & explicit understanding of the human form. Mud craft is probably the earliest of man's formations and marks his coming of age. It is as though as man faced environment he was stirred by its challenge. India is rich in its terracotta and pottery civilizations, many of which have their roots in early history. Pottery has a wide universality and its custom goes back to span of five millennium. Terracotta pottery has been called the lyric of handicrafts because of its irresistible appeal. A variety of earthen objects are created such as lamps, jugs, flower vases, containers, musical implements, candle stands etc. In Chunar, terracotta articles, including toys are produced as ritual items for beautification and for utility throughout the state. The other crafts made are incense flames, toys, dolls and figurines etc.

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Women potters run-through a unique hand modeling method, probably dialing back to earlier than Neolithic times before the invention of the wheel. The products made are surface of plain pots, water filters, vases, incense burners, lamps and hukkas.

Pottery is our oldest handicraft. In prehistoric times, most likely water was carried in woven baskets lined with the river clay. After the water was poured out of the container the layer of clay dried. The loss of moisture caused the shape to shrink and separate from the sides of the basket. When the clay, now shaped like a pot, was removed, and dried in the sun on hot sand, it retained the basket pattern. Early men and women then discovered that they could harden the molded pottery in hot ashes and make sturdy containers to transport and store food-stuffs. From these would have been extended the pots formed by hand and decorated with crude tools.

In ancient times, mankind made kilns to place their clay pots in for firing. The Kiln was lined with a kind of insulation brick that was made from a mixture of straw and clay, which had been dried in the sun. Later they used finer clay with high quartz content for their delicate pottery. They rubbed the pieces with a smooth stone to give a dull sheen or coated them with a fine layer of another color of the clay.

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Different varieties of pottery designs.



Clay models yet to be painted.

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Clay model is being dipped in black paint by artisan.



Artisans involved in the process of painting the clay models.



Artisan selling the finally completed products.



Artisans who are involved in pottery making.

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Artisan involved in painting the patterns on model.



Process of pottery making.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools used for Chunar Red Clay Pottery are as follows:

- **Mitti/Red Clay:** Mud used to make the objects.
- **Mustard Oil:** Helps in keeping mud intact.
- **Potter Wheel:** Helps in spinning the mud and carving out an object.
- **Starch:** Helps in getting stiffness in clay.
- **Dry Branches:** Its used for kiln and acts as an agent of fuel.
- **Firewood/Rice Strew:** Helps in continuous fire over the night for kiln.
- **Ash:** Its used as a powder to protect from sticking to one another.
- **Water:** Its used to mix with clay to follow the process.
- **Molds:** Its used to shape the object for a final outcome.
- **Lahasur:** A tool used to cut the clay.
- **Kilns:** Where the clay pots are baked and operated at temperatures between 700 – 800 degrees Celsius.
- **Stick:** It is used to spins the wheel around.

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Knife used to remove excess clay.

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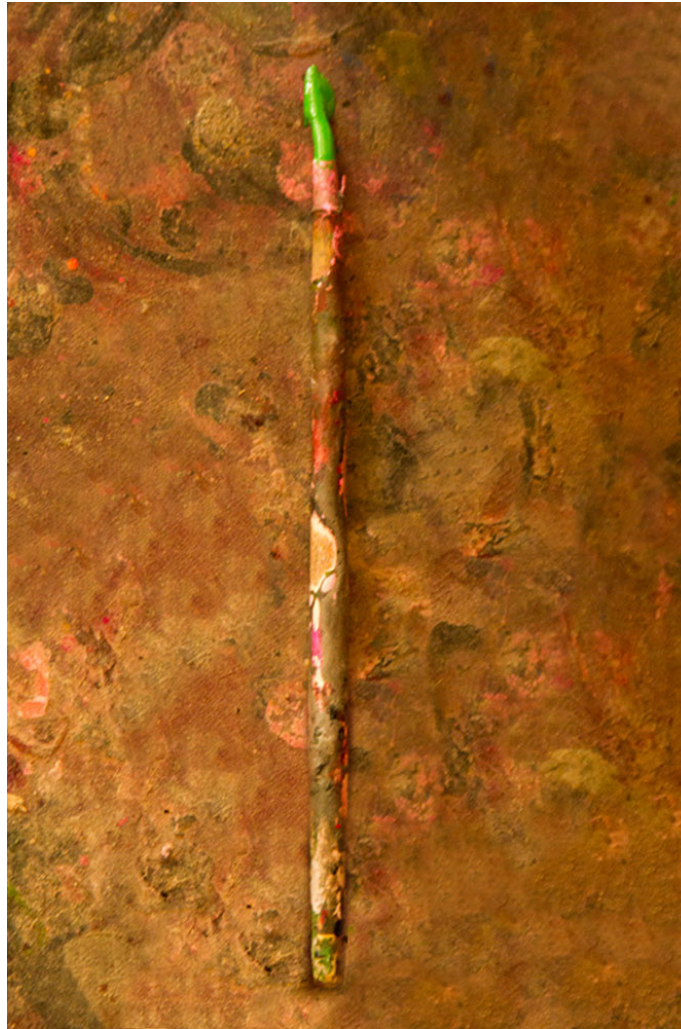
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Brush made of stick used to paint on the clay models.



Plaster of Paris mold is used to make money box.



Chalk powder tied in a cloth.

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Mold used to level the clay.

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Colours used to paint the clay items.

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Making Process

The structures, which are mandatory for a variety of uses, are turned on the wheel. The convinced portions such as the nozzle or the handle are left out. Clay is casted unconnectedly and then committed to the body. After it, incising patterns on the surface for making geometrical patterns ensures the decoration. The clay assorted with ash and sand is squeezed by feet, collected and cut with lahasur. It is then squeezed with hand, on peeda and a lump is completed. All the compact particles are removed and ready mud is kept on wheel for producing various forms. A potter's wheel has small sports, turns on an axle of hard wood or metal and is postulated with a large hub, which acts as a rotating table.

The potter throws the squeezed clay into the midpoint of the wheel, and spins the wheel around with the stick. Due to the centrifugal strength the lump of clay is pulled centrifugally and upwards and shaped into a container. This is dragged out with a string, dried and aflame in a potter's kiln. Clay article after firing turns to terracotta.

The pots are fired in simple open-pit kilns that are very efficient and inexpensive for firing pots at a temperature of 700 - 800 degree Celsius.

The pots are organized in layers of pots; a layer of sprigs, twigs and cow dung cake is sometimes additional. The mound is then protected with a blanket of rice straw, which, in turn is enclosed, with a thin layer of loamy soil. The firing takes four to five hours. Black, red and yellow clay are castoff for making terracotta objects.

The measureable is mixed properly and dehydrated under the hot sun so that any sort of dampness, if present, may evaporate.

Then the mixture of wet clay is filtered through a fine sieve to remove pebble.

After giving figure with hands the items is then baked in the improvised kilns sheltered with cow dung cakes, fuel and saw dust etc. This is pulled out with a string, dried and fired in a potters kiln.

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Flow Chart:

1. Clay is casted and then committed to the body

2. Clay assorted with ash and sand is squeezed by feet

3. It is then squeezed with hand, on peeda

4. Ready mud is kept of the pottery wheel

5. Pottery wheel spines manually with the help of a stick

6. The squeezed clay is thrown into the midpoint of the wheel

7. Lump of clay is pulled upwards and shaped into a container

8. Pots are arranged in layer of sprigs and cow dung cake

9. Mound is covered with blanket of rice straw & a layer of soil

10. The mound is protected with blanket of rice straw to cover a thin layer of soil

11. The craft is kept under the sun to completely dry

12. Clay article after firing turns to terracotta

Firing pots at a temperature of 700 - 800 degree Celsius

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Leveling the clay.



Dapping chalk powder on clay.

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Placing clay inside the mold.



Pressing the clay to get the impression of design in mold.



Excess clay is being removed.

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After placing the clay inside mold, mold is being closed.



Both the molds are joined together to get a 3D clay model.

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Gap is being filled by clay.

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Taking out the clay model from mold.



Money box made of clay.

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Mold is being painted by artisan.



Clay is removed from the mold.



Artisan painting patterns on clay model.

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Red color is being used by artisan to create patterns on model.



Artisan involved in the Process of painting clay model.

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Products

They also make dense clay toys and dolls, which are cast in charred clay molds. Large porcelains of gods and goddesses are also made in clay and make a lot of income for these descendants. India is rich in its soil and pottery traditions numerous of which have their ancestries in prehistory. Pottery has a extensive universality and its custom goes back to span of five millennium. Terracotta pottery has remained called the lyric of handicrafts because of its mouthwatering appeal. A variety of earthen objects are fashioned such as lamps, pitchers, flower vases, pots, musical apparatuses, candle stands etc.



Pumpkin shaped money box.

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Different varieties of pottery items.



Bottle design made out of clay.



Jars made of clay.



Flower vase made of clay.

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Couple dressed in traditional attire.



Teacups made of clay.



Pickle jar made of clay.

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Durga Maa face.



Shivalingam idol.

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Money Box made out of clay.

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Video



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