

Black and Red Ware (BRW), Technique and Historical Significance

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Black and Red Ware is an ancient type of pottery known for its unique two colours black on the inside and red on the outside. It was commonly used by early communities in India and shows the gradual improvement in pottery-making techniques. This pottery is important because it helps us understand the daily life and skills of people in ancient times.

About Black and Red Ware

- **Meaning:** Black and Red Ware (BRW) is a type of ancient pottery that is easily identified by its two colours black on the inside and rim, and red on the outside. This colour combination was not accidental but created through a special firing process.
- **Time Period:** BRW has a very long history in India. It first appeared in the **Neolithic period** and continued through the Harappan phase, Bronze Age, Iron Age, megalithic period, and even into the early historical period. This shows that it remained in use for many centuries.
- **Region / Distribution:** It has been found across a wide area of India, including Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and parts of South India. In the western Ganga plain (western Uttar Pradesh),

it is dated around 1450–1200 BCE. In this region, it came after Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) and was later replaced by Painted Grey Ware (PGW).

- **Cultural Association:** BRW is connected with several ancient cultures. One important example is the Ahar-Banas culture of Rajasthan, where this pottery was often decorated with white painted linear designs. Its presence in different regions shows that many communities adopted and adapted this pottery style.
- **Features:** BRW is known for its distinct two-colour appearance. The pots are generally well-shaped, medium to fine in quality, and stronger than earlier handmade pottery. Some pieces are plain, while others have simple painted designs. The surface is often smooth, and the pottery shows better control in shaping and firing.
- **Technique:** The two colours were produced by a special firing method. During firing, the pot was placed in such a way that the inside received less oxygen (which turned it black), while the outside was exposed to more oxygen (which turned it red). This shows that ancient potters had developed a good understanding of firing techniques and kiln control.
- **Lifestyle and Economy:** The people associated with BRW were mainly settled agricultural communities. They practiced subsistence farming, growing crops like rice, barley, and legumes. This indicates a stable lifestyle with dependence on agriculture rather than hunting alone.
- **Associated Findings:** Excavations at BRW sites have revealed many other objects, such as ornaments made of shell, copper, carnelian, and terracotta. This shows that people were skilled not only in pottery but also in making jewellery and using different materials, indicating trade and craft specialization.
- **Uses:** BRW was mainly used for everyday household purposes such as cooking, storing food and water, and serving meals. Some decorated pieces might also have been used for special or ritual purposes.
- **Significance:** Black and Red Ware is very important for understanding ancient Indian history. It shows the development of pottery-making techniques, improvement in firing methods, and growing craftsmanship. It also reflects the lifestyle, agriculture, and cultural practices of early communities. Most importantly, it helps historians trace the transition between different cultural phases, such as from OCP to PGW in certain regions.

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