



The Origin and Development of Northern Black Polished Ware: An Indian Archaeological Perspective

KEYWORDS

Northern Black Polished Ware Qualities, Unique creation of Potteries, Origin & Development, Chronology

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ABSTRACT *Archaeology is the base of History and it will not be wrong and exaggerated if we say that archaeological evidences are the mirror of our great historical past. Without these evidences, we cannot ascertain the reality of our past. Hence, archaeological evidences have played an important role to shape the history of any era. Archaeological remains, which were found during excavation of a particular site, in the form of Potteries, Coins, Sculptures, Potsherd, Metals, Terracotta's, Artifacts etc. are very important source of information about that particular site. Northern Black Polished Wares (Potteries), the originator of Second Urbanization in India (During 6 century B.C.), have given a new dimension to Indian History. These wares have helped us to know the most specific civilization as well as primitive civilized places of India. These wares were found in especially North Western region of India. In this paper I would be throwing some light on the origin and development of Northern Black Polished Ware and how it affected the Indian history during 6 century B.C.*

INTRODUCTION

Northern Black Polished Wares are the well-known and finest ware of ancient India mainly found in northern parts of India. It has presented a strong base to Indian dating chronology. Generally it has thin black potteries with slip having lots of varieties like Grey, Red, Ochre, Silver and Gold. These wares have shown a highest degree of technological excellence during 6 century B.C., which is exceptional. According to Mortimer Wheeler, "These wares are as famous in Indian Archaeological as 'Terra Sigillata' in European continental. First time these wares were found at the sites of Sarnath and Bhita and were believed to be of Pre Mauryan period (6 - 4 century B.C.). Thereafter It was found on Bhir mound at Taxila, which is now located in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

BAPTISE

It is very true that these types of potteries have first found in northern region of ancient India and that why it is called as Northern Black Polished Wares (NBPW). Also these wares were mainly of black colour having the slips of different color and polished. Yet there is some controversy related with the name of pottery because later on these types of potteries have found in all parts of India. But it is very important to know that occurrence rate of NBPW in rest of India except Northern region is very less. So according to Archaeologist baptize of the name of this ware is justified.

EXPANSION

As the name signifies, it is essentially a pottery of Northern India but again it also has a very wide distribution in terms of time and space. NBPW stretched especially in Afghanistan, Pakistan i.e. the Northern part of Indian region. In North Western part, its potsherds were found in Begram (Afghanistan), Taxila (Rawalpindi), Charsadda (Peshavar), Udaygram (Peshawar, Pakistan). In Western Gujarat, these were found especially in Arabian Sea coastal place like Prabhas Patan. In South India, its potsherd was found at Nagarjunikonda, Amaravati, and Dharanikota and in southern west in Orissa Shisupalgarh and in east Tamluk, Chandrakhetugarh in Bengal. Its main occurrence, however, is the Middle Ganga Basin, more particularly the ancient Magadh region, the area around Patna, ancient Patliputra, and the capital of imperial Maurya's. Excavation, carried out in different part of country, also indicates the expansion of NBPW in Alamgirpur, Ahichhatra, Kasserli, Roper, Ratura, Bairat, Saravasti, Atranjikhara, Sugh, Sanghol, Noh, and Eastern Uttar Pradesh and

Rajasthan. So it is clear that N.B.P.W. has a very wide distribution all over the Indian sub - continent, after the black and red ware. The total spread area of these wares is expected to be around 4000 sq. km.

TECHNOLOGY OF MAKING POTTERY

The most important and crucial aspect of NBPW is that "how these potteries and its slips would have been made and subsequently polished?" According to Dr. B.B.Lal, the archaeological chemist, the gloss on potteries was due to the post firing application of organic material on the pottery when it was in red hot condition. Mr. Hegde is of the opinion that the black color was due to the oxide of iron and its luster is a sort of glaze for which powdered glass may have been used. Mr. Bharadwaj's investigation led him to conclude that the black color of the slip is the result of carbon and magnetic ferrous silicate. These wares were made by fast running potter's wheel. According to Mr. Sanaullah, "The black coating contains about 13% ferrous oxide which is responsible for the black shade". The original slip was evidently a highly ferruginous body, possibly of a finely levitated mixture of clay and red ochre ground in water and applied to the surface of the vessel before it was fired. The black color was doubtlessly developed by the action of reducing gases formed in the kiln. The polishing might have been done before or after firing. The coating is not having a siliceous glaze.

IMPORTANT WARE FORM

N.B.P. wares are found all over India with some specific differences. NBP ware forms are very unique in structure like royal potteries. The most numbers of wares, which have been found, are bowl with straight sides and dishes with incurved rim. Bowls are sometime corrugated and have tapering sides, Knotted Lid. Vessel, few Lid with flat terminal, Carinated Handi, Spouted Vessel, Bottle necked Vases are extremely rare.

ARTIFICIAL EMBLEM ON WARES

Some of the potteries which have been found during excavation are having some specific decoration in specific style. These decorations & styles include straight lines, bands, dots, concentric circle, intersecting circle, semi circle, wavy lines, and loops. These decorations were made on the brown, blue, yellow, drab orange backgrounds.

ORIGIN OF NORTHERN BLACK POLISHED WARE TRADITION

After influenced by the polishing and shine of the wares some archaeologists have pointed out its origin as "Western origin". They have advocated that Greek black glazed potteries are the originator of NBPW. But this view is not being considered due of lack of evidences. Mr. Wheeler proposed "Persian origin" of these wares. But the abundance of NBPW in Ganga valley confirms its "Indian origin". According to Dr. B.B.Lal, "Probably black and red stone is the originator of NBPW." Although there are so many different views about the origin of NBPW but we got the authentic evidence by the chronological strata of excavated site.

CHRONOLOGY

According to Archaeological features and evidence found during the excavation at Taxila, Hastinapur, Kausambi, Saravasti, and Sarnath, the time period for the NBPW is considered during 8 to 6 century B.C. According to Marshall, NBPW were found in Taxila during Pre-Greek period i.e. 300BC and therefore he has considered the 500-200 BC as the time bracket. During Hastinapur excavation, the strata found was divided into five cultural era and in the third strata we have found the evidences of NBPW, which belongs to 6 century B.C. to 3 century B.C. At Kausambi site, the evidence of 25 constructional phases was found. There was almost no gap found between all phases except the third as the third with transitional fourth strata was found to be related with N.B.P.W. which is related to 6 century B.C. On the basis of carbon dating of N.B.P.W. potsherd, it is certain that during the 6 century BC northern black polished ware unconditionally came into existence. Traditionally, the wares found were not homogenous in the entire area of its distribution as it always found with two phases. The first one is represented

by sites like Vaishali and Rajgir, where its beginning time is around 7 century B.C. and the earlier phase has been identified by the site of Saravasti. Famous Archaeologist T.N.Roy has divided the NBP into two phases out of which the earlier one is found at most of the Uttar Pradesh site and at the middle Ganga basin. General impressions on potteries have been divided into three phases, the first phase beginning in the Kausambi - Patna region (7 – 6 B.C.) followed by second one during Maghadan Empire (5-2 B.C.) and the third one during Sunga period (2-1 B.C.).

DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN BLACK POLISHED WARE

Northern black polished ware is the most alight chapter of Indian archaeology. In Ganga valley, second urbanization has started together with N.B.P.W. tradition. We have found the vogue of iron with this tradition and this may have been the only cause of second urban civilization along with N.B.P.W. tradition. There are so many characteristic hallmark of this tradition, which indicates the theory of second urbanization, like iron instrument, coins, establishment of agriculture and ranching, structures, terracotta, beads, authentic potteries, ivory instrument etc.

CONCLUSION

So at the end I would like to conclude that Northern Black Polished Ware are the most primitive archaeological source of Indian history, which indicates the lost phase of second urbanization civilization. Each and every aspect related to this tradition reflects some peculiar orientation. Without understanding this tradition we cannot imagine the history of 6 century B.C.

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