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Blue Pottery of Jaipur: The No-Clay Ceramic Craft

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Blue Pottery of Jaipur: The No-Clay Ceramic Craft

Jaipur Blue Pottery is a ceramic craft that uses no clay. Its body is quartz, glass and multani mitti. This article covers the materials, the origin, the revival and the exam traps.

At a glance

Four key facts on this topic

01 **No clay**Quartz and glass body.

02 **One firing**Clay needs two.

03 **Cobalt oxide**Gives the blue.

04 **GI registered**Certificate 10 Jul 2008.

What is Blue Pottery?

1 Blue Pottery in brief

1.1 What is Jaipur Blue Pottery?

It is a ceramic craft of Jaipur, Rajasthan. It is a registered Geographical Indication (GI). A GI tag protects the name of a product that comes from one region.

The registry lists the product GI as application 66, certificate 74, goods class 21 (handicraft). Its certificate date is 10 July 2008.



A collection of Jaipur Blue Pottery pieces. Photo: Neek-Theri, Wikimedia Commons ("Blue Pottery Jaipur Collection.jpg"), CC BY-SA 4.0.

1.2 Why is it special?

It uses no clay at all. The pieces are painted completely by hand. The craft is Turko-Persian in origin. Jaipur took it up from elsewhere.

> 11. **Think it through:** What is the headline fact about its material?
> See answer ↓

> **Quick check 1.** True or false: Jaipur Blue Pottery is made from ordinary red clay. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Quick check 2.** True or false: Blue Pottery is a registered GI. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: search.ipindia.gov.in; nabard.org; origin-gi.com; aiacaonline.org

2 Materials and colour

2.1 What is the dough made of?

The dough is quartz stone powder, powdered glass, multani mitti, borax, gum and water. Multani mitti is fuller's earth, a fine natural powder. The GI form says no red clay is used.

The body is a quartz-based ceramic. It is hygienic and suits daily use.

2.2 Why is only one firing needed?

All the materials fire at the same temperature. So one firing bakes and glazes the piece. Clay pottery needs two firings.

2.3 Where do the colours come from?

Blue comes from cobalt oxide. Sources say chrome oxide gives green and cadmium oxide gives yellow. Sources differ on whether copper oxide gives green or turquoise.

12. **Think it through:** How many firings does Blue Pottery need?
See answer ↓

Quick check 3. True or false: Blue Pottery needs two firings, like clay pottery. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 4. True or false: Cobalt oxide gives the blue colour. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: cbseacademic.nic.in; globalinch.org; deccanherald.com

How did it grow?

3 Where did it come from?

3.1 What is the Turko-Persian link?

Some sources say Mongol artisans first developed the blue glaze technique. They joined Chinese glazing with Persian decoration. Some sources say it reached India in the 14th century.

3.2 How did it reach Jaipur?

Under the Mughals it was used for tiles on mosques and tombs. Sources say it came to Jaipur in the 17th century. The GI form says Man Singh I first brought blue-and-white ware to Jaipur.

> 13. **Think it through:** Is the technique native to Rajasthan? See answer ↓

> **Quick check 5.** True or false: The Blue Pottery technique began in Rajasthan. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: studiopotter.org

4 The kite legend

4.1 What is the kite story?

A popular legend says a Jaipur ruler lost kite fights to two brothers. They had coated their strings with blue-green glass powder. The ruler then took an interest in the craft.

Sources name different rulers and potters. So treat it as a legend, not a dated record.

4.2 Who was Sawai Ram Singh?

He ruled Jaipur from 1835 to 1880. He set up the School of Art at Jaipur in 1866.

4.3 Why did the craft weaken?

The Churaman family kept the art restricted to themselves for generations. The family gradually lost its hold on the craft.

> 14. **Think it through:** Why call the kite story a legend? See answer ↓

> **Quick check 6.** True or false: Every source names the same ruler in the kite story. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: 30stades.com

5 Decline and revival

5.1 How close did it come to dying out?

The art had almost vanished by the 1950s. Sources agree on this.

5.2 Who helped the revival?

Maharani Gayatri Devi gave land, a building and patronage. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay of the Handicraft Board gave the finance. The Handicraft Board is part of the Government of India. So the revival had official support.

5.3 Who was Kripal Singh Shekhawat?

He was a painter who is widely recognised as the blue pottery revivalist. He was born in 1922. The training school opened in 1963 as the Sawai Ram Singh Shilp Kala Mandir. He was its first director.

He received the Padma Shri in 1974. He was honoured as a Shilp Guru for ceramics in 2002.

15. **Think it through:** Was the revival a private effort only? See answer ↓

Quick check 7. True or false: Kripal Singh Shekhawat received the Padma Shri in 1974. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 8. True or false: The revival had no government help. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: dagworld.com; archive.pib.gov.in; indianceramicstriennale.com

What are the exam traps?

6 Exam traps

6.1 Which GI facts are tested?

The product GI is application 66, certificate 74, class 21. The applicant is the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts). The certificate date is 10 July 2008. Application 540, dated 29 April 2017, is the Blue Pottery of Jaipur (Logo). Use the registry date fields.

6.2 Which facts do students mix up?

- No clay is used. The body is quartz, glass and multani mitti.
- One firing is enough. Clay pottery needs two.

- Cobalt oxide gives blue. Sources differ on copper oxide.
- The technique is Turko-Persian, not native to Rajasthan.
- The 1963 school is not the 1866 School of Art.

Quick check 9. True or false: The 29 April 2017 registry entry is the product GI certificate for Blue Pottery. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 10. True or false: The School of Art was set up in 1866. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Remember this

- **Material:** no clay; quartz, glass, multani mitti.
- **Firing:** one firing only.
- **Colour:** cobalt oxide gives blue.
- **Origin:** Turko-Persian; the kite story is a legend.
- **Revival:** Shekhawat, Gayatri Devi and the Handicraft Board; GI certificate 10 July 2008.

Explain it back: Why does Blue Pottery need only one firing?

Practice MCQs

1. What replaces clay in the body of Jaipur Blue Pottery?

A. Red clay and sand

B. Quartz stone powder, powdered glass and multani mitti

C. Plaster of Paris and chalk

D. Terracotta and lime

See answer ↓

2. How many firings does Blue Pottery need?

A. One

B. Two

C. Four

D. Three

See answer ↓

3. Which oxide gives Blue Pottery its blue colour?

A. Cadmium oxide

B. Cobalt oxide

C. Iron oxide

D. Chrome oxide

See answer ↓

4. Who is widely recognised as the main revivalist of Jaipur Blue Pottery, though trained as a painter?

A. Leela Bordia

B. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

C. Gayatri Devi

D. Kripal Singh Shekhawat

See answer ↓

5. In which year was the Sawai Ram Singh Shilp Kala Mandir established?

A. 1974

B. 1950

C. 1866

D. 1963

See answer ↓

6. What is the origin of the Blue Pottery technique?

A. Chinese only

B. Native to Rajasthan

C. Turko-Persian

D. Greek

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The dough is quartz stone powder, powdered glass, multani mitti, borax, gum and water. Why the others fail: the GI form says no red clay is used. Memory hook: no clay, only quartz and glass. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** All its materials fire at the same temperature, so one firing bakes and glazes it. Clay pottery needs two firings. Why the others fail: they match no source. Memory hook: one fire, no clay. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** Blue comes from cobalt oxide. Why the others fail: sources link chrome oxide to green and cadmium oxide to yellow. Memory hook: cobalt = blue. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** Kripal Singh Shekhawat trained as a painter and led the revival. He won the Padma Shri in 1974. Why the others fail: Gayatri Devi gave land and patronage, and Kamaladevi's Handicraft Board gave finance. Memory hook: Shekhawat = painter and reviver. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** The training school opened in 1963 with Kripal Singh Shekhawat as first director. Why the others fail: 1866 is the year of the School of Art. Memory hook: 1866 art school, 1963 Shilp Kala Mandir. ↑ Q5
6. **C.** The technique is Turko-Persian in origin. Jaipur took it up from elsewhere. Why the others fail: it is not native to Rajasthan. Memory hook: taken up, not invented, in Jaipur. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** It uses no clay. The body is made of quartz stone powder, glass and other materials. ↑ 1
2. **True.** The GI Registry lists the product as application 66. ↑ 2
3. **False.** It needs only one firing. ↑ 3
4. **True.** The blue colour comes from cobalt oxide. ↑ 4
5. **False.** It is Turko-Persian in origin and came to Jaipur from outside. ↑ 5
6. **False.** The sources name different rulers, so it is a legend. ↑ 6
7. **True.** He also became a Shilp Guru in 2002. ↑ 7
8. **False.** The Handicraft Board of the Government of India gave the finance. ↑ 8

9. **False.** The product GI is application 66, certificate 74, dated 10 July 2008. The 2017 entry (application 540, certificate 293) is the Blue Pottery of Jaipur (Logo). ↑ 9
10. **True.** The 1963 school is a different institution. ↑ 10
11. **Think it through.** It uses no clay. ↑ 11
12. **Think it through.** Only one. ↑ 12
13. **Think it through.** It came to Rajasthan from outside. ↑ 13
14. **Think it through.** Because the GI form itself calls it a story, and sources name different rulers. ↑ 14
15. **Think it through.** The Handicraft Board of the Government of India gave the finance. ↑ 15

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