Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware

The two most distinctive ceramic wares of ancient India, called respectively as the Painted Grey Ware and the Northern Black Polished Ware, have figured considerably in the discussions in the foregoing pages. These are quite familiar terms in India but are not so well known outside. Ample has been written about them already, and various facets of these wares have been touched upon in the course of the discussions or in the notes. Nevertheless, it was felt it would be helpful in several ways to treat them separately but briefly only to indicate the main characteristics of these wares.

(a) The Painted Grey Ware.— It is a well-burnt thin grey ware of smooth texture and fine fabric and profusely painted in linear or dotted designs, often in combination, and is widely distributed in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. From the evidence so far collected, its distribution spreads from Lakhiopir in West Pakistan across Bikaner to the Ganga plains (fig. 18) with limited traces further south.

The usual shapes (fig. 19) comprise bowls, cups and dishes and indicate special use as a de luxe ware.

It was first observed at Ahichchatra in District Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh and described in an Appendix, in A.I., no. 1, pp. 58-59.
As the layer in which this ware occurred at this site contained also a few sherds of the Northern Black Polished Ware, the two wares were considered as coeval, though the possibility of an earlier evolution of the Painted Grey Ware and a later overlap with Northern Black Polished Ware was clearly recognized. The truth of such an overlap existing between the two wares has been indicated by the evidence from the recent excavations at Sravasti (I.A., 1958-59, pp. 47-50).

The Painted Grey Ware was pursued by B.B. Lal, subsequently and found in a large number of sites, in the course of a surface exploration. He then began to think, on the showing of the evidence then in hand, that this ware might be associated with the Aryans. He gave expression to this thought in a paper on the Painted Grey Ware of the Upper Gangetic basin, published in J.R.A.S., Bengal, vol. XVI, No.1, 1950, pp. 89 ff.

The excavations at Hastinapura which followed these explorations supported the inference of Lal a little more strongly.

The description of the details of the Ware can be seen in Lal's publication of the report on the excavations at Hastinapura, in A.I., nos. 10 & 11, pp. 30, 32-44.

(See also D.H. Gordon, The Pottery Industries of the Indo-Iranian Border, A.I., nos. 10 & 11, p. 175; Wheeler, Early India and Pakistan, pp. 26-30).
(b) **Northern Black Polished Ware.**—It is, as its name implies, a black ware of well levigated clay, which is usually grey but sometimes reddish in section, well-burnt, sturdy, with a metallic sound, of smooth texture, and prominently slipped which is brilliantly burnished or polished to the quality of a glaze. The colour of the polish changes occasionally from coal-tar black to a steely, silvery or a golden shine or lustre.

The usual shapes (fig. 20) are bowls, dishes, lids and **hândis** (carinated jars) and indicate special uses.

It is widely distributed (fig. 18) in northern India, hence its name; though it is not a strictly correct assessment as the ware has been observed in south India as well, namely, at Amaravati. It is sometimes decorated with paint or with stamped designs.

It was first described at length in *A.I.*, no. 1, pp. 55-58. The subsequent explorations and excavations have widened the knowledge of the distribution of the ware.

Earlier it was dated to the period between the fifth and the second centuries B.C. (*A.I.*, no. 1, p.56). Lal endeavoured to date it between circa 600 and 200 B.C. (*A.I.*, nos. 10 & 11, pp. 22-23, 51-52).

(See also Gordon, *op. cit.* p. 175; Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-33.)