

2. Indian Pottery

of the human civilization.

According to T.N. Mukherji, there is an interesting story about the creation of the first pot. "The need of a pot was felt almost from the very beginning of things since there was a keeper and there was something to keep." The necessity for such a thing was felt even in the very nebulous stage of the world, when the Gods and Demons combined to churn the ocean for wealth. That fierce churning yielded many precious things, among which was the nectar to make God immortal for all time. Something was needed to hold the nectar. Vishwamitra, the celestial artificer, pondered and took out from each of the assembled Gods a bit of the Kala or spirit with which their bodies were made, and moulded it into a pot, perhaps the first of its kind in the world. From the Kala came the Sanskrit word 'Kalasa' or 'water-pot'.

But a single pot could not satisfy the needs of the world. Pots were necessary in daily life and thus came into existence the class of potters who alone had the skill to make them. This came about when God Shiva at last decided to do something for the happiness of the world. On the occasion of his marriage to Sati, the Primordial Energy, there was no pot available for use during the wedding ceremonies. So Shiva took a bead from his necklace and from it he created a man and from another he created a woman and ordained that they should forthwith make a "Kumbha" or water-pot. Thus was born the caste of "Kumbhars" or potters, also called "Kumars" in Bengal. Even today, the potters call themselves Rudrapals, after the name of the first potter created by Shiva.

According to Russel and Hirajal: "In the Krita yuga when Maheshwara (Siva) intended to marry the daughter of Hemwanta, the Devas and Asuras assembled at Kailas (Heaven). Then the question arose as to who should furnish the vessels required for the ceremony and one Kulalka, a Brahmin, was ordered to make them. Then Kulalka stood before the assembly with folded hands and prayed that materials might be given to him for making them. So Vishnu gave him Sudarsana (Discus) to be used as a wheel and the mountain of Mandara was fixed as pivot beneath to hold it up. The serpent was Adir Kurma, the tortoise, and a rain cloud was used for the water tub. So Kulalka made the pots and gave them to Maheshwara for his marriage and ever since his descendants have been known as Kumbhars or makers of water-jars."

European Version

According to the European writers also, it was just by accident that