

CORUNDUM AND SAPPHIRE



Indian Minerals Yearbook 2020

(Part- III : Mineral Reviews)

59th Edition

MINOR MINERALS

30.4 CORUNDUM_(Minor) AND SAPPHIRE_(Major)

(ADVANCE RELEASE)

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF MINES
INDIAN BUREAU OF MINES**

Indira Bhavan, Civil Lines,
NAGPUR – 440 001

PHONE/FAX NO. (0712) 2565471
PBX : (0712) 2562649, 2560544, 2560648
E-MAIL : cme@ibm.gov.in
Website: www.ibm.gov.in

July, 2021

30-4 Corundum and Sapphire

Corundum is a natural oxide of alumina with 52.9% alumina and 47.1% oxygen. It is very hard (9 on Mohs scale) following diamond. Corundum is found in rocks containing a high percentage of alkalis, deficient in silica and excess of alumina. It is generally found in association with rocks like syenite, nepheline syenite and anorthosite. Described to be formed as a result of metamorphism of high aluminous clay, corundum is often found associated with andalusite, kyanite and sillimanite. Corundum also occurs as masses adjacent to ultramafic intrusives, associated with lamprophyre dykes and as large crystals in pegmatites. The most common occurrence of corundum would be as a detrital mineral in streams and beach sands because of its hardness and resistance to weathering. Pure corundum is colourless and clear if transparent or pale white if opaque. The vivid colours of corundum gem varieties, such as, ruby and sapphire arise primarily from elemental substitution in the Al site by transition metal elements. The most common cations found as substitute are Fe^{+2} , Fe^{+3} , Ti^{+4} , Cr^{+3} and V^{+3} . Pink and red colour corundum are called ruby while blue coloured corundum is called sapphire and all other colours are called fancy sapphires. Usually rubies will have more or less 1 wt% of Cr_2O_3 while blue sapphires primarily have Fe^{+2} and Ti^{+4} substituting into the crystal structure of Al. Some corundum gemstones show "asterism" or a star effect due to inclusion of rutile needles within the crystal of corundum.

RESERVES/RESOURCES

The reserves/resources of corundum in India are found in association with kyanite and sillimanite in Assam, Meghalaya and Maharashtra. It occurs in syenites and ultrabasic rocks in Telangana. A few outcrops of pegmatites containing corundum occur in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh and Morena district, Madhya Pradesh. Translucent to opaque ruby, sometimes with asterism is known to be abundant in Mysuru district in Karnataka.

Precious and semi-precious varieties of corundum have been reported from Tamil Nadu in Kangeyam belt stretching over Karur and Kulithalai tehsils in Tiruchirapalli district and Vedachandur tehsil in Dindigul district.

As per NMI data as on 1.4.2015 based on UNFC System, the total reserves/resources of corundum was estimated at 294 thousand tonnes of which 200 tonnes were placed under Reserves category and the bulk of over 293 thousand tonnes under 'Remaining Resources' category. The resources of corundum are located in Karnataka (68%), Telangana (26%) and Rajasthan (4%), besides a share of the Remaining Resources was contributed by Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

The total reserves/resources of ruby as on 1.4.2015 was estimated at 5,349 kg and the entire resources are placed under 'Remaining Resources' category and are located in Odisha. The total reserves/resources of sapphire was estimated at 450 kg, all of which is placed under 'Remaining Resources' category and is located in Jammu & Kashmir [Tables - 1(A) to 1(C)].

EXPLORATION & DEVELOPMENT

The exploration & development details, if any, are covered in the Review on "Exploration & Development" under "General Reviews".

PRODUCTION

Corundum

As per Govt of India Notification S.O. 423(E), dated 10th February 2015, 'Corundum' has been declared as 'Minor Mineral', hence the producers report the production data directly to the respective States and not to IBM. However, 'Sapphire' has been retained as Major Mineral. Statewise production of corundum and sapphire is not available.

Ruby

There was no production of ruby reported since the year 2015-16.

CORUNDUM AND SAPPHIRE

**Table – 1(A): Reserves/Resources of Corundum as on 1.4.2015
(By Grades/States)**

Grade/State	Reserves				Remaining Resources				Total Resources (A+B)				
	Proved STD111	Probable		Total (A)	Feasibility STD211	Pre-feasibility		Inferred STD333		Reconnaissance STD334	Total (B)		
		STD121	STD122			STD221	STD222						
All India : Total	200	-	-	200	70844	1073	63060	13	38	105794	52675	293497	293697
By Grades													
Semi-precious	-	-	-	-	-	34	-	-	1	895	-	930	930
Industrial	-	-	-	-	65020	1039	53767	-	28	90479	52675	263007	263007
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4	4
Unclassified	200	-	-	200	-	-	11	13	1	2533	-	2558	2758
Not-known	-	-	-	-	5824	-	9282	-	8	11883	-	26997	26997
By States													
Andhra Pradesh	200	-	-	200	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	7	207
Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	-	100	310	188	-	-	288	-	885	885
Karnataka	-	-	-	-	64920	756	53590	13	38	27575	52675	199566	199566
Rajasthan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11925	-	11925	11925
Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4000	-	4000	4000
Telangana	-	-	-	-	5824	-	9282	-	-	62007	-	77113	77113

Figures rounded off.

CORUNDUM AND SAPPHIRE

**Table – 1(B): Reserves/Resources of Ruby as on 1.4.2015
(By Grades/States)**

Grade/State	Reserves			Remaining Resources					Total Resources (A+B)		
	Proved STD111	Probable STD121 STD122	Total (A)	Feasibility STD211	Pre-feasibility STD221 STD222	Measured STD331	Indicated STD332	Inferred STD333		Reconnaissance STD334	Total (B)
All India : Total	-	-	-	-	429	3296	-	-	1623	-	5349
By Grade											
Unclassified	-	-	-	-	429	3296	-	-	1623	-	5349
By State											
Odisha	-	-	-	-	429	3296	-	-	1623	-	5349

*Figures rounded off.***Table – 1(C): Reserves/Resources of Sapphire as on 1.4.2015
(By Grade/State)**

Grade/State	Reserves			Remaining Resources					Total Resources (A+B)	
	Proved STD111	Probable STD121 STD122	Total (A)	Feasibility STD211	Pre-feasibility STD221 STD222	Measured STD331	Indicated STD332	Inferred STD333		Reconnaissance STD334
All India : Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	450	-	450
By Grade										
Unclassified	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	450	-	450
By State										
Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	450	-	450

Figures rounded off.

CONSUMPTION & USES

Corundum is valued mostly for its abrasive and refractory properties. Its melting point is 2010 °C and hence it is used in a sintered form for the manufacture of special refractory crucibles, rods and other materials.

Corundum's bright and glassy lustre, splintery property as it is devoid of cleavage plane and inclusions makes it preferred substance by industry for the manufacture of superior grade abrasives. After processing, it is used in grinding and polishing wheels, grinding belts, emery papers and cloth & grinding pastes. High-grade corundum with low iron finds use as ramming mass in the electric arc furnace. It is also used in mortars, wire drawing dies, thread guides and gauge blocks. Gem varieties are sometimes used for pivot supporters in delicate scientific instruments, as jewel in watches. Sapphire has emerged as a versatile material useful to a range of industries in many varied applications including LEDs, optical and Radio Frequency Integrated Circuits (RFICS).

WORLD SCENARIO

Corundum & sapphire are reported from Sri Lanka, especially from the area of Ratnapura, Bibile and Rakwana. Ruby with a brownish tint comes from Chanthaburi district in Thailand. Fine gem ruby and sapphire come from Luc Yen, Yen Bai Province in Vietnam; the Hunza Valley, Gilgit in Pakistan; and Jegdalek, Surobi district, Afghanistan. Gem quality sapphire is reported from Pailin, Cambodia. Africa has also become a significant producer of corundum, especially in Madagascar, where it is found in the Zazafotsy Quarry, Ambahatraso; and in Andranondambo, Amboasary District. Rubies are found in Longido, Kilimanjaro Region and Winza, in Arusha area, Tanzania. In the US, the Yogo Gulch near Helena and waterworn sapphire stones are found in River Missouri throughout its length.

The area of Mogok, Myanmar is the source of some of the best gem-quality ruby. Another significant Burmese deposit is Mong Hsu.

FOREIGN TRADE

Export value of uncut ruby and sapphire decreased drastically by 76% to ` 17.27 crore in 2019-20 as compared to ` 72.27 crore in 2018-19. In terms of quantity exports were mainly to Hong Kong (50%), Singapore (30%) and Thailand (20%) (Table - 2).

Import value of uncut ruby and sapphire also decreased to ` 73.37 crore in 2019-20 from ` 1,595 crore in 2018-19, though imports in terms of quantity increased in 2019-20 as compared 2018-19. Imports in terms of quantity were mainly from Tanzania (44%), Thailand (25%) and Mozambique & Guinea (11% each) (Table - 3).

Like previous years no trade of cut ruby and sapphire was reported during 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Table-2: Exports of Ruby and Sapphire: Uncut (By Countries)

Country	2018-19 (R)		2019-20 (P)	
	Qty (t)	Value (` '000)	Qty (t)	Value (` '000)
All Countries	13	722689	10	172726
Singapore	1	689305	3	147391
Thailand	2	14446	2	15599
Hong Kong	1	13141	5	7309
USA	++	991	++	1351
UK	++	236	++	526
Japan	++	217	++	122
China	-	-	++	118
Turkey	-	-	++	100
Italy	-	-	++	80
Sri Lanka	-	-	++	55
Other countries	10	4353	++	76

Note : '++' Negligible, '-' Nil

Total may not tally due to rounding off.

Table-3: Imports of Ruby and Sapphire: Uncut (By Countries)

Country	2018-19 (R)		2019-20 (P)	
	Qty (t)	Value (` '000)	Qty (t)	Value (` '000)
All Countries	31	15952729	55	733728
Thailand	19	370782	14	313709
Hong Kong	2	5785854	++	238184
USA	++	95753	++	48666
Mozambique	1	340067	6	38454
Switzerland	-	--	++	20391
China	++	31878	++	15828
Tanzania	++	701	24	14081
Singapore	++	13112	++	11656
Kenya	5	14389	1	10588
Guinea	++	802	6	9356
Other countries	3	9299390	3	12816

Note : '++' Negligible, '-' Nil

Total may not tally due to rounding off.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Corundum has been produced synthetically since 1837 and gem quality of synthetic corundum entered the market place in the early 1990s. Very large sizes of crystals can be made by Czochralski's Drawing Method. Another method is Verneuil process but synthetic gem variety can be recognised by trained gemologist. The market for synthetic corundum is mainly driven by industrial abrasion applications. The natural occurring corundum has

tremendous value in the gemstone market and is the most desirable precious stone after diamond. Owing to its uncommon colours, corundum's demand in the Jewellery Segment is increasingly on the rise. Apart from rubies and sapphire, rare gemstones, such as, padparadscha sapphire, witnessed expanding market demands.

In India, the gemstone market has been expanding. The gemstone market in India (which includes ruby & sapphire) is expected to ramp-up in the coming years.