

A FIELD CLASSIFICATION OF
LOW VALUE CORUNDUM IN SRI LANKA

W.S. Fernando and E.S.K. Soysa*
Dept. of Chemistry, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.
*Lanka Ceramic Ltd., Piliyandala

The heat treatment of various gem stones to enhance their colour has been practiced in Sri Lanka. Over the decades there has been an increase in the use of heat treatments, particularly as applied to the Corundum family. From about the early 1970s considerable attention has been given to this area of activity. The most common stones subjected to this thermal treatment are the low value Corundums of which geuda is a common variety. The Thai rough geuda buyer still dominates in the Batugedara area which is the main geuda centre in Ratnapura (City of Gems). The Thai buyers export large quantities of rough material per annum through the official geuda trading floor in Ratnapura.

The present account classifies low value Corundum into a series of materials on the basis of a field visual classification. Local persons involved in the geuda gem trade use a number of terms when referring to uncut or rough stones. These stones are described by particular names. The terms have now been examined in great detail and the present study is the first field classification of low value Corundum so far attempted. This classification over the years has been developed by the gem trade on colour, nature of crystalline rutile layers and their general appearance. It is presumed that this classification would be of some value to all those interested in the geuda trade both local and foreign persons. It is also expected that this classification would form the basis for further systematic and scientific studies on the various varieties of low value Corundum in Sri Lanka.