

## CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA'S MICA MINES

## GLOBAL BEAUTY INDUSTRY

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### Where does sparkly makeup come from?

Mica is a key ingredient for the billion-dollar beauty industry. Many women wear the sparkly mineral found in lipstick, eyeshadow, nail polish and blush. This highly sought after mineral is also used in other industries such as construction, home appliances, aerospace, automotive, oil, arts and crafts.


To enable us to enjoy these luxury items, Indian children are forced to work in dangerous and illegal mica mines every day. Occupational hazards to child labourers include head injuries, cuts and abrasions, skin and respiratory infections like silicosis, TB and asthma.



Source: [https://farm6.staticflickr.com/5591/13895271749\\_89e7f3afb8\\_o.jpg](https://farm6.staticflickr.com/5591/13895271749_89e7f3afb8_o.jpg).


**India: main producer of mica**

Approximately 60% of the world's mica comes from India. Around 95% of India's mica is distributed in three states of Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The world's largest deposit of mica is in the Koderma district in Jharkhand.

	Jharkhand	Andhra Pradesh	Rajasthan	Other Producers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 50% of mica production in India.</li> <li>• Found in an area extending 150km in length and 32km in width.</li> <li>• Spreads from Gaya district in Bihar to Hazaribagh and Koderma districts in Jharkhand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second largest producer of mica in India.</li> <li>• Accounting for nearly 25% of India's mica.</li> <li>• Covers an area 97km long and 24-30 km wide.</li> <li>• Found in Nellore district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area is 322 km long and average width is 96 km.</li> <li>• Extends from Jaipur to Udaipur.</li> <li>• Main producing districts are Bhilwara, Jaipur, Tonk, Sikar, Dungarpur and Ajmer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounts for 1% mica production in India.</li> <li>• Main states are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.</li> </ul>

**Interesting facts**

- About 50% of India's mica exports goes to China. It is then routed to European and US cosmetic giants.
- Two decades since most mica mines in India were closed on environmental grounds. However, the closures prompted many people to resort to illegal mining, pushing children into hazardous work.
- Most of India's exports of high-quality mica flakes comes from illegal mines and are produced by child miners.
- About 500 Indian villages are dependent on the mica trade.
- Around 5,000 children extract mica from illegal mines in Jharkhand and Bihar.
- Every kilogram of mica a child digs, he/she is paid five rupees (equivalent to eight cents).
- Good quality mica can sometimes fetch up to \$1000 dollars per kilogram.

 According to UN Child Conventions, it's illegal for children under 14 years to work with mica extraction or in mining in general. Moreover, International Labour Organisation says minors working in a mine is the worst form of child labour.

 According to NGO research firm DanWatch, 12 out of 16 international cosmetic companies knowingly or unknowingly use child labour for their products.

## The lost childhood of India's mica minors

Reduced version from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/The-lost-childhood-of-Indias-mica-minors/articleshow/51871390.cms>



In 2010, eight-year-old Ranjit was working in an open-pit mine outside his village Chanako in Jharkhand's Koderma district when part of the periphery collapsed. His nightmare stems from suffocating in the debris for a few minutes before being rescued. "When the mine collapsed," he says, "that's where my mom got buried." Ranjit's village is in the heart of India's mica belt, which runs through the dense forests of northern Jharkhand and southern Bihar. The entire landscape glitters in the sunlight. Imagine a giant brush coating the baked earth with rouge -- the shimmer is uncannily similar because top cosmetics brands use mica powder, sourced from this region, to give lipstick and eye shadow their sparkle. Mica also gives automotive paints their shine and is used in food colouring, pharmaceuticals and electrical appliances like toasters and electric irons. With few employment opportunities but an abundance of mica, illegal mining has become a family business with children working alongside their parents to put food on the table. The mica is first sold to small-time traders, changing hands multiple times before reaching Giridih-Jharkhand's mica processing and export centre.

### History

The British first chanced upon the area's vast mica deposits while laying railroad tracks in the 1890s. Mining activities began and Koderma district was dubbed 'Abhrak (mica) Nagari'. Until the 1950s, over 700 legal mines existed employing about 24,000 people. Mine owners, flush with cash, built palatial bungalows in Koderma's Jhumri Tilaiya, imported foreign cars and Arabian thoroughbreds. Their employees had steady jobs and access to healthcare at the Central Mica Mine Labour Welfare Hospital, a 100-bed super-speciality institution. But the discovery of a mica substitute, coupled with restrictions on mining imposed by the 1980 Forest (Conservation) Act and the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 (India's biggest mica importer) led to the industry's decline. When most legal mines shut down Koderma's sprawling medical facility became a ghost town. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Chinese economic boom and the global craze for "natural" cosmetics revived the flagging industry. But by then, it had become a shadowy black market forcing families, impoverished by the closure of legal mines, into dangerous pits without protective gear. To crack down on such operations, the state set up "flying squads" of mining and forest officers. But a former illegal mine operator says greasing the palms of local officials keeps the mica racket running smoothly.

### What is being done?

- **Beauty industry**

The Natural Resources Stewardship Circle (NRSC), a French non-profit organisation whose members are from the beauty and fragrance industries, hosted a Responsible Mica Sourcing Summit in Delhi. The goal was to make 63 stakeholders (including brands, suppliers, and representatives from the Bihar and Jharkhand child labour commissions), aware of mica's social and environmental risks. An agreement was reached to focus on "traceability and transparency, community empowerment and multi-stakeholder governance". Estee Lauder, Chanel, Yves Rocher, Clarins, and L'Oreal helped organise the summit along with pharmaceutical giant Merck and pigment manufacturer Sudarshan.

- **Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA)**

BBA is a non-government organisation that has managed to root out child labour in 105 child friendly villages. However, it still leaves about 400 villages or 60,000 children. In the last five years, BBA enrolled 3,650 at-risk kids in school. Giridih's Tisri Block education officer claims over 90% of approximately 35,000 kids in BBA villages stay in school.

## Two faces of shine!



While rich cosmetic companies count their cash children risk their lives to put the 'sparkle' into our cosmetics.  
<http://r.huffpost.com/gen/1763712/images/o-INDIA-CHILD-SLAVES-facebook.jpg>

### Activities:

'As the sun crawls up the sky in Koderma, abandoned mica mines start shimmering in its reflection. Driven by hunger pangs, a group of sleepy children from a neighbouring village trudges towards the Charki mines, holding mining tools in their hands.'

'Five-year-old Ajay Das hurriedly slips into a narrow hole and starts his day. His tiny hands can barely balance the hammer, but he still hits the shimmering wall accurately and breaks the flakes off it. The mineral that falls off in flakes is called mica, which is used to add glitter in natural cosmetics. Ajay works six days a week.' .... 'After toiling for 7-8 hours a day, Ajay manages to earn a paltry sum of Rs 20.' <http://www.pointblank7.in/?p=3220>

- What is mica?
- Where is mica found in India?
- What is mica's use in everyday life in Australia?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of mining mica illegally? Present as a two column table.
- What are the two faces of shine in the photograph above?
- Imagine you were a child working in a mica mine. Describe your life.
- Mica is used as a key ingredient in cosmetic products and is used not only to add sparkle to products, but to absorb excess oils and give it a consistent texture. Research the cosmetic products that use mica. Present research as a list.

### ICT

Child labour behind international cosmetic brands <http://www.corporatejustice.org/Child-labour-behind-international.html?lang=cs>

Children in India Risk illness and death to mine an ingredient found in cosmetics  
<http://assets.inhabits.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Child-Labor-Behind-Key-Cosmetic-Ingredient-537x402.jpg>

### Did you know?

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), mining is one of the worst forms of child labour.