UNDERSTANDING THE PERSISTENCE OF ORE AT DEPTH: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

S. D. Deshmukh, Vikas Swarnkar, Nikhil Kumar Verma and Sana Siddique

Department of Geology, Govt.V.Y.T.PG Autonomous College, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

Email of corresponding author: deshmukhgeol@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Geologists and mining professionals need to effectively identify and describe the persistence of ore at depth; this is possible only through a holistic approach that considers geological, geochemical, geophysical, and economic factors to make informed decisions about resource potential and mining feasibility. In the realm of mineral resources, the persistence of ore deposits at depth has long been a focal point for both geological research and mining endeavours. This review article embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing the continuity of ore bodies beneath the Earth's surface. This review seeks to unravel the intricate factors shaping the subsurface architecture of mineral deposits and the factors that dictate the vertical extension of ore bodies.

Keywords: Ore persistence, geological processes, deep mining, orebody continuity, exploration strategies, mineralization mechanisms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Persistence of ore at depth means the continuous occurrence or distribution of ore deposits within the Earth's crust. Ore persistence is a critical factor in the mining industry, and it involves understanding how ore bodies are distributed in terms of their size, shape, and continuity at depth. The quest for understanding the persistence of ore at depth represents a pivotal junction where geological inquiry converges with the practical challenges faced by the mining industry. From a mining perspective, accessing and extracting ore at depth present unique challenges.

This review article aspires to serve as a bridge between the geological and mining communities, fostering a deeper appreciation for the dynamic interplay that determines the persistence of ore deposits beneath the Earth's surface. Through an integrative approach, we endeavour to inspire collaborative efforts that transcend disciplinary boundaries, thus enhancing the understanding about sustainable utilization of mineral resources.

II. PERSISTENCE OF ORE AT DEPTH: VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

A proper understanding about the persistence of ore at depth needs in depth knowledge of the following:

2.1 Geological Considerations:

2.1.1 Process of formation of mineral deposit:

Mineral deposits are sites of anomalous concentration of valuable minerals or metals because some medium serves as a concentrating and transporting agent for the ore minerals, and some process subsequently causes the transporting agent to precipitate, or deposit, the minerals. They can form through various geological processes, including hydrothermal deposition, magmatic activity, sedimentation, and metamorphism. Understanding the geological processes responsible for ore formation helps in predicting where and how ore bodies might be found over the surface or beneath the surface of the Earth.

2.1.2 Nature and Morphology of ore body:

The understanding about size, shape, continuity and attitude of ore body is crucial factor that will help in efficient extraction of ore. The ore bodies are classified as concordant (i.e. stratiform ore deposits) or discordant based on the attitudinal relation of the ore body with the host rocks.

2.1.3 Structural Bottoming:

Geological structures, such as faults, fractures, folds, and shear zones, play a significant role in controlling the distribution of mineralization. Understanding the structural controls is essential for determining the boundaries of the ore body and its depth extent.

Structural bottoming in mining geology refers to the determination of the lowest limit or depth extent of economically viable mineralization based on the understanding of the structural features of the ore deposit. This process involves studying the geological structures that influence the distribution, shape, and orientation of the mineralized zones within the

Earth's crust. Identifying the structural bottom of a deposit is crucial for mine planning, resource estimation, and optimizing extraction methods.

2.1.4 Mineralogical bottoming:

In the context of mining geology, it refers to the process of reaching the lowest or deepest point in a mineral deposit where economic concentrations of valuable minerals are found. It involves understanding the vertical extent and distribution of the ore body and determining the point at which the mineralization diminishes or becomes economically unviable for further extraction. Mineralogical bottoming is a critical phase in the lifecycle of a mining project, influencing decisions on mine development, extraction methods, and economic viability.

2.2 Technological Considerations:

From a mining perspective, accessing and extracting ore at depth present unique challenges related to methodologies employed in deep mining, addressing issues such as rock mechanics, ventilation, energy considerations, groundwater conditions and also viability of mining operations in deeper realms. It means that even if the ore persists at depth, the viability of mining operations has to be considered. Strategic mine planning includes designing mining methods, infrastructure, and extraction sequences that optimize the recovery of economically viable ore while minimizing operational costs.

2.3 Economic and Environmental Considerations:

The persistence of ore is evaluated not only in geological terms but also economically. Mining companies assess whether the cost of extracting ore at depth is justified by the value of the extracted minerals. Factors such as commodity prices, extraction methods, and technological feasibility influence these economic considerations.

The quest for ore at depth is inseparable from environmental and social responsibilities. The sustainable practices and ethical considerations associated with deep mining, ensuring that the pursuit of mineral resources harmonizes with ecological preservation and community well-being.

III. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED TO STUDY THE PERSISTENCE OF ORE AT DEPTH

Identifying and describing the persistence of ore at depth involves a combination of geological, geophysical, and geochemical exploration tools and techniques. These include:

3.1 Geological Mapping:

Geological mapping can help us to understand the regional geology and identify potential host rocks and structures. It will provide us insights into the geological history of the area and guide exploration efforts.

3.2 Sampling:

Anomalous concentrations of certain elements in rock, soil and water samples may indicate the presence of mineralization. Surface sampling can help identify areas with elevated mineral content and guide further exploration.

3.3 Geophysical Surveys:

Geophysical data obtained from geophysical methods such as magnetic surveys, gravity surveys, and electrical resistivity surveys to identify subsurface structures and anomalies can provide information about the rock types, structures, and potential mineralization at depth.

3.4 Remote Sensing:

Remote sensing techniques, including satellite imagery and aerial surveys, help us to identify alterations and geological features associated with mineralization. Remote sensing can cover large areas and help pinpoint areas of interest for further exploration.

3.5 Drilling Programs:

Analysis of the drill cores obtained from drilling programs can guide us about the mineral content, alteration patterns, and structural features. Drill data provides crucial information about the depth and geometry of ore bodies.

3.6 Geochemical Analysis:

Geochemical tracers aid in deciphering the migration pathways, source regions, and enrichment processes that contribute to ore persistence.

3.7 Metallurgical Studies:

Metallurgical studies give us an idea about how the mineralogy affects ore processing and recovery. Different mineralogical compositions may require specific processing methods, and changes in mineralogy with depth can impact the overall recovery efficiency.

3.8 Three-dimensional Geological Modelling software:

Three-dimensional geological models can be generated through software using data obtained from geological mapping, drilling, and geophysical surveys. This modelling helps visualize the subsurface distribution of ore bodies and their geometry at depth.

3.9 Hydrogeological Studies:

Knowledge of groundwater flow, aquifer characteristics, and potential water-rock interactions is crucial for assessing the persistence of ore bodies.

By combining these exploration and analysis techniques, geologists and mining professionals can effectively identify and describe the persistence of ore at depth.

IV CONCLUSION

The persistence of ore at depth involves understanding the geological, structural, and economic factors that influence the continuity of ore bodies in the Earth's crust. This knowledge is essential for successful mineral exploration and mining operations. The persistence of ore at depth is a critical consideration for the long-term sustainability of mining operations.

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