

Alexandrite Myths, Legends and Lore

"It is not necessary to trust everything, that people say, but it is also not necessary to consider also that they say without reason."

Emanuel Kant



Compared to rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds, [alexandrite](#) is a relatively new [gemstone](#) that was only discovered some 150 years ago. Despite its short history, this remarkable gem has already been ascribed with a variety of magical and mystical properties.

Perhaps the first person to attribute [alexandrite](#) with magical powers was the Russian writer Nikolai Semyonovich Leskov (1831-1895) who wrote a short novel, "Alexandrite, Mysterious Interpretation of a True Fact", in which the gem plays a major role and is defined as a prophetic stone. At nearly the same time, Eliphas Levi, a French author and magician (1810 -1875), connected the duality of the colors in alexandrite with the duality of human blood -- venous and arterial. In his book, *La Clef des Grandes Mysteres* (The Key to the Great Mysteries), he refers to alexandrite as "the favorite charm of our time which clears and strengthens the blood vessels".

It isn't surprising that various magical attributes have been associated with [alexandrite](#). Such a rare and valuable gem with a mysterious origin was unlikely to be ignored when the connection of gemstones with different months or astrological signs had already been accepted for more than 2000 years. Many cultures associate gems with the signs of the zodiac or months of the year and are thought to be lucky or important for people born under their influence. The tradition of birthstones first became popular in the Middle Ages, but probably started much earlier.

See Alexandrite Tsarstone collectors guide, Alexandrite Myths, Legends and Lore, <http://www.alexandrite.net/viewpage.html?id=ALXS-002-00014> (Collection of myths, legends and lore surrounding the alexandrite gemstone) (as of).

At first, there were two ways in which a [gemstone](#) could become associated with a person's month of birth. The first was through Biblical references. The Talmud mentions the use of precious stones as talismans. Sometime around 200 AD, the historian Josephus described a connection between the months of the year and the breastplate of the high priest in the Great Temple in Jerusalem. The external part of the breastplate was set with four rows of gems, three in each row, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Exodus xxviii, 17-20.) The names of these stones are generally agreed to be:

- * Odem (sardion), carnelian (sardius, ruby).
- * Pitdah (topazion), topaz or peridot.
- * Bareketh (smaragdus), smaragd or emerald (carbuncle emerald).
- * Nofek (anthrax), carbuncle, probably the Indian ruby (ruby, carbuncle).
- * Sappir (sapfeiros), sapphire or lapis lazuli (sapphire).
- * Yahalom (jaspis), onyx, a kind of chalcedon ([diamond](#), sardonyx).
- * Leshem (ligyrion), jacinth, others sapphire (jacinth, amber).
- * Shebo (achates) agate.
- * Achlama (amethystos), amethyst.
- * Tarshish (chrysolithos), chrysolite, others topaz ([beryl](#), chalcedony).
- * Shoham (beryllion), beryl (onyx, beryl).
- * Yashpeh (onychion), jasper.

There is no certainty about the modern equivalents for these biblical names of gems and several lists exist. Precious stones were not indigenous to Palestine and were imported by merchants from Arabia and Phoenicia so the names could only have been derived from stones known to have been available at that time.

The second system of associating birthstones is astrological, where each stone is related to a planet according to its color and properties. As there was no way to confirm the composition of gemstones before 1900, many names were used interchangeably.

One of the reasons for the variations in the birthstones lists is related to color. Since so many gemstones are available in a variety of colors and because color was such an important factor in establishing the astrological relationships, it is easy to understand how differences could arise. There is also confusion about which stone belongs to which zodiac sign or month because the months of the zodiac signs don't correspond to calendar months but rather extend from some time around the 21st of one month to the 21st of the next month -- (the precise date varies each year.) Furthermore, the calendar has changed since the original relationship between gemstones and months was developed and this has led to even more confusion.

Various [birthstone](#) lists have been used in different cultures but in 1912, the American National Association of Jewelers (previously the American National Retail Jeweler's Association) adopted a list which included [alexandrite](#) and that was accepted as the standard in the United States and most other places. The traditional birthstone list is an older version of this and is based on birthstone traditions from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. Since then, many

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of the traditional stones on the list were changed to correspond with stones that were more commercially available. In 1952, a variation of the list was approved by the American National Retail Jewelers Association, the National Jewelers Association, and the [American Gem Society](#). In this list, Alexandrite is offered as an alternative to pearl and therefore associated with the month of June. It is also suggested as the [gemstone](#) for a 55th wedding anniversary (sometimes also the 35th or 45th, in place of emerald.)

But in India, where gems and astrology have always been a part of everyday life and culture, the astrologers follow their own traditional system where each planet reflects its own cosmic color and generates an influence that radiates throughout the cosmos. These vibrations have an influence on the life of every living creature and the location of the planets at the time of a person's birth can be mapped through an astrological birth chart that relates to every aspect of life. Certain planets will be well positioned while others may be unfavorably or neutrally positioned. Gemstones are used to strengthen positive positioning and alleviate the effects of unfavorable positioning. Therefore, the choice of gemstones isn't simply based only on the birth month, but rather derived from a number of factors.

In Indian, or Vedic, astrology, each stone is associated with a planet, a day of the week, a time of day, and various other attributes associated with that planet. [Alexandrite](#) is associated with the planet Mercury -- the trickster. Alexandrite's ability to change color and its obviously dual nature is further associated with the zodiac sign of Gemini, which is a sign ruled by Mercury. The association with the sign of Gemini means that Alexandrite has a connection with the month of June as this sign covering the period between 21st May and 21st June. In Russia, Alexandrite is associated with the month of August, and it's zodiac sign Leo is related to royalty.

When choosing an individual's [gemstone](#) in India and in using gems for magic, the associations and correspondences with the planet Mercury are considered in detail. Mercury is the fastest moving of the planets. It shows how quickly we can change our thoughts, and how fast our thoughts travel. In occult thought, Mercury represents both the messenger and the magician. It connects the mortal or ego self, the intuitive, or lower self, and the higher divine self. As Mercury is associated with air, [alexandrite](#) is an air stone and so connected to the throat chakra. But, because of its duality in color, it has also been associated with the heart, the solar plexus, and the crown chakra.

Mercury also represents the power of the mind, our ability to think, perceive, and communicate and it rules over the power of our words and how we use them. It is the planet most associated with the rational world. In magic, [alexandrite](#) can be used alongside other Mercury ruled objects to cast spells that enhance communication, mental clarity, memory, and perception. It can be used in meditation, to promote emotional balance, and to bring about change, happiness, and success. It is thought to be most powerful when the sun's rays are shining on it and is reportedly useful for astral travel.

And finally, as the planet Mercury is associated with the color green this is another reason why [alexandrite](#) is seen as a Mercury stone. However, since alexandrite can be green or red,

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it has also been connected with the planet Mars, which corresponds to red. This is why some references also associate alexandrite with the zodiac sign of Scorpio, which is ruled by Mars.

The caduceus symbol used for doctors and medicine is also a Mercury symbol and Mercury is associated with healing and was originally the god of medicine. Therefore, [alexandrite](#) is a healing stone. As the planet Mercury corresponds to the mind and the nervous system, alexandrite is specifically associated with balancing the mind and helping to achieve calm and is recommended as an anti stress and choleric amulet. Alexandrite is said to be useful for overcoming a lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and a lack of direction or focus in life. Meditating with the stone is supposed to help identify goals and plan how to begin working towards them. Alexandrite is also purported to relieve spleen and pancreatic problems and to help treat swollen lymph nodes.

In more modern forms of astrology, gemstones tend to be associated with the zodiac signs, rather than with planets. This originates from the idea of associating gemstones with planets, as each planet is said to rule a zodiac sign. Each gem conducts the energies of the particular sign or planet with which it synergizes. Wearing the stone of the appropriate sign focuses the energies of the sign through the gem.

Cat's eyes are associated with Ketu, or the south node of the Moon (the point opposite that point where the Moon's orbit crosses the apparent path of the Sun). Therefore, the cat's eye version of [Alexandrite](#) corresponds to the south node. The cat's eye version of Alexandrite is also associated with the zodiac sign Pisces and the element of water. Cat's eye gemstones should be worn when there are obstacles in business, or a fear of accidents. They bring strength, brightness, bravery, pleasure, bliss, and prosperity. In India, they are believed to save one from enemies and to lessen sorrow, poverty, diseases and calamities as well guarding against evil spirits, hidden enemies, and royal punishment. Alexandrite is said to help finding lost money and to bring luck in gambling. A cat's-eye should be bought on a Wednesday, Thursday, or a Friday, and the best time to wear a cat's-eye ring for the first time is two hours after sunset, or in the evening. Cat's eye alexandrite is also associated with the number seven.

Apart from astrology, green is the color of revival, hope, prosperity, rest, peace, calm, and fertility where as red is the color of blood, energy, activity, self-expression, power, aggression, and passion. This combination means that [alexandrite](#) is a symbol of love and jealousy at the same time. In its daytime appearance, it corresponds to luck and good fortune and at night, its appearance it is more closely associated with love. Some believe that an alexandrite in hand can help clarify doubts about love and marriage.

Dreams of [alexandrite](#) are said to symbolise struggle and progress. In Kabbalistic magic, alexandrite is associated with Zain, or the seventeenth path of the Tree of Life. It connects Spiritual Love and the centered self. In the Tarot, alexandrite is associated with the Lovers, the card that is connected with choice. The Avesty's astrological school consider alexandrite as a stone for spirituality where the owners of the stone must be prepared to overcome hardship after which alexandrite will bring calm, luck, and victory. Alexandrite is a symbol of summer,

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of Fridays, and the ninth day of lunar month and it is on this day that it is particularly good to present or purchase alexandrite. It is also recommended to wear for people who born on January 30, February 20, March 4 and 13, April 2 and 13, May 2, July 18, August 9 and 24, September 9, and 25, November 26 and December 25.

So how could this astrological symbol of luck and of fortune and of hope and prosperity, become a symbol of misfortune in the Soviet Union after World War II? The notion of [alexandrite](#) as a widow stone of grief and misfortune probably originated in late 1940's after the end of World War II. A staggering 7,000,000 Soviet soldiers died in battle. Increased death and decreased birth rates attributable to the war probably meant the loss of another 8,000,000 lives at least. Almost every Russian family lost someone, usually a husband or a son. Taking into account that simulated alexandrite [jewelry](#) was very popular across the Soviet Union, (although almost all of it is was [synthetic color change corundum](#)), it isn't surprising that alexandrite became a symbol of misfortune in Soviet Union.

[Alexandrite](#) is the stone of duality. Green or red, good luck or misfortune, the significance is interpretive and related to the social and historical context of the time and the culture. Forever changing its colors, alexandrite is a magical [gemstone](#) with universal appeal that continues to fascinate and be admired by astrologers, scientists, and gem lovers throughout the world.