Striking OPTIONS

Garnet is a semi-precious gemstone that occurs in a variety of colours, with red being the most common. Usually sold without treatments of any kind, garnets are durable, have a high refractive index and can be used in jewellery at a relatively low cost. The Gemological Institute of America shares a few fundamentals of this lovely gemstone.

Garnets come in a rich palette of colours: greens, oranges, yellows, purples and purplish reds. Red garnet is the most common and widespread; all other colours of garnet are not so abundant. There are more than 20 garnet categories called species. The birthstone for January, garnet includes affordable dark red varieties, rare and valuable greens and many colours in between. The degree of rarity of each of these garnets has a direct impact on their relative value.

History and lore

Thousands of years ago, red garnet necklaces adorned the necks of Egypt’s pharaohs and were entwined with their mummified corpses as prized possessions for the afterlife. In ancient Rome, signet rings with carved garnets were used to stamp the wax that secured important documents.

Ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans thought of garnet as a protective gemstone that would light the night and protect wearers from evil and doom. Travellers are known to carry garnet to protect themselves against accidents. The gemstone symbolises faith, truth, compassion and fidelity and is also rumoured to increase confidence, courage, energy and security.

Red garnets

Rhodolite

The garnet species rhodolite was first discovered in the US state of North Carolina. East Africa has been the most important source of rhodolite in recent years, found widely in Tanzania. Other significant sources include Sri Lanka, Madagascar and Russia in India. Rhodolite is the most valuable of the red garnets. At its best, it is a lovely and vibrant purplish red that has done much to bring red garnets back into fashion.

Pyrope and Almandine

Pyrope and almandine appear in a range of orange red to slightly purplish red to strongly reddish purple hues. Dark red garnets abound in mass-produced jewellery. These mixtures of pyrope and almandine are usually a dark-toned, brownish orange to brownish red to purplish red hue with low saturation.

Green garnets

Tsavorite

Most favourite garnets come from the East African countries of Tanzania, Kenya and

Garnets symbolise faith, truth, compassion and fidelity.

Garnet is the birthstone of January and the zodiac stone for those born under the sign Aquarius, the mid-winter season between January 20 and February 18. It is a semi-precious stone that has always been in fashion, lending vitality and strength to the wearer.

Garnets come in many colours such as red, orange, yellow, green, purple, brown, blue, black, pink as well as colourless and anyone who loves what is pure and natural and the warm, sun-bathed colours of late summer will be fired with enthusiasm by the colour spectrum of the garnet. Today, garnets are very much in fashion in India.

They are sourced mostly from African countries, although we do have garnets that come from India and Russia and Central and South America. Skilled hands of cutters the world over work them into many classical shapes, but of late we are increasingly getting modern, imaginative designer cuts as well.

Garnets are a compelling semi-precious stone whose beauty is natural and unashamed. The variety of colours and tremendous brilliance is also extremely alluring. Anyone who possesses garnet jewellery can be assured of long-lasting joy.

Of course, these days there are also plenty of lab-created garnets, which come under the category of synthetic corundum. Synthetic garnets are made by a method called flame fusion and look like natural gemstones. They also have the same chemical properties of the real stones and only a trained eye can make out the difference between the two.

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Madagascar, with some minor sources in Pakistan.

Tsavorite’s vibrant green comes in a range of colours. Gem dealers place the highest value on vivid, strongly saturated bluish green to green gems of medium to medium-dark tone. Tsavorite can be used as a less-expensive alternative to emerald because it is more consistent in colour, more brilliant and easier to match. Large tsavorites – from two to three carats and more — are sold as beautiful gems in their own right, not just as emerald alternatives.

Demantoid
Demantoid is a rare and beautiful gem. Like tsavorite, high-quality, vivid green demantoid can rival emerald in price. Demantoid is found in Russia, Central Namibia, Iran, Italy, Greece and Mexico.

Demantoid colours range from a yellowish or brownish green hue to a very rare, intense green that is similar to fine emerald. Gem dealers consider the best colour to be a moderately strong to strongly saturated green of medium to medium-dark tone. Greenish yellow, yellowish green and brownish stones are still attractive due to the gem’s high lustre and dispersion. Prices for demantoid are high because supplies are inconsistent. Green demantoid garnet has a dispersion of 0.057 that gives it a “fire” that exceeds that of diamonds at 0.044.

Orange garnets
Spessartite
Spessartite was once a rare garnet known mostly to collectors. Until recently, most spessartite sources were inconsistent, but new deposits in Madagascar, Namibia, Zambia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Brazil and especially Nigeria, has helped increase the supply of this attractive garnet.

Spessartite can range in colour from a pale yellowish orange to bright orange to a dark orange red. The most favoured colour is a vivid aurora red, which is a highly saturated, slightly reddish orange hue with medium to medium-dark tone. Although new finds have made spessartite much more available, large, fine-quality stones above five carats remain rare. As a result, prices for large, good-quality stones are high.

Garnets are the most affordable of gemstones, a stone of purity and truth as well as a symbol of love and compassion. They are a much-sought-after and much-worked-upon gemstone. It is not the classical gemstone colours — red and green — that are highly esteemed and valued but also the fine hues in between like yellow, orange and purple. There are more than 20 species of garnet but only six are used widely — pyrope, almandine, spessartite, grossularite, uvarovite and andradite. Pyrope, almandine and spessartite are known as aluminium garnets and the remaining three are calcium garnets.

The Indian market has a totally different view on garnet than a gemologist. According to the market, garnet is a stone used in fashionable jewellery whereas gomedhut (gomed or gomed) is what is used following astrologers’ recommendations. Even today, most businesses classify garnets by their colour — all red and red to purple garnets are almandite and orange-coloured are hessonite or gomedhut. Obviously, because of pronounced astrological beliefs, the Indian market emphasises more on hessonite garnet. In order to cater to requirements, the Indian market imports good quantity of hessonite garnets from Sri Lanka, Africa and Madagascar. We do get hessonite garnets from Orissa in India, but they are generally considered of low quality and value in comparison to Sri Lankan ones (commonly known as Ceyloni gomedi). According to astrologers, a bright orange colour is the best colour of hessonite garnet, with the colour often compared to a cow’s urine.

Hessonite garnet alone makes up a share that is equal to other Navagraha gemstones. Generally, hessonite prices vary between ₹700 and ₹5,000 per carat, depending on its quality and origin. In recent years, tsavorite garnet (green) has gained popularity as a substitute for emeralds in view of the sudden increase in prices of emeralds. Its price ranges between ₹2,500 and ₹5,000 per carat.

Garnet (hessonite) has a good reputation among Indian astrologers and is believed to cure the ill-effects of Rahu. In ancient times, red garnets were generally donated to priests for bringing prosperity and good luck to the giver and the same is still practised and advised by astrologers in India today. Astrologers believe that gomedhut should be worn at a specific time to get the most powerful results — two hours after sunset on Sunday and after having energised the stone by chanting Rahu mantras. Three or more garnets on the desk are also known to stimulate success in business. It is also believed that a garnet under a pillow cures depression. It can be used to regain lost self-esteem when worn as jewellery. Garnets are also known to absorb negative energies from the environment and used to reduce body toxins, purify vital organs and blood, and assist in assimilation of vitamins and minerals.

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Garnet is a family of minerals, not just one mineral species. There are six well-known garnet minerals such as almandine, grossularite, pyrope, spessartite, andradite and uvarovite. Garnet is very popular in today's market. It is the birthstone for January and the oldest-discovered gemstone, having been in use since the Bronze Age.

As far as colour is concerned most people think that garnets are only dark red. However, the assumption is wrong since I have seen garnets in green, colourless, pink, yellow, orange, purple and brown shades. Black and near-black are also common varieties. The rarest colour of garnet is blue. The colour of garnets is always natural because any treatment on the stone is ineffective. Doublets (the thin flat section of a gemstone that is pasted atop a thick base such as glass) of garnet are also available but rare because of the affordability factor.

The gemstone is also used in many industries. The most valuable of garnets are the green coloured ones such as tsavorite and demantoid. Colour-changing garnets from Tanzania and Malaysian garnets are also popular. Garnets that are well-crystallised and attractive are extremely valuable in today's markets. Its benefits are many and hence it is popularly recommended. Garnets bring balance in life and eliminate all the negativities from the mind. It enhances the composure, strength, contemplation and generosity of the wearer. It is also believed that wearing a garnet promotes good health, with folklore creating a strong link between red garnet and blood. As far as mental health is concerned, garnets help the wearer resist melancholy and ward off evil spirits. It has the ability to help overcome depression and strengthen survival instinct in a crisis or traumatic situations.

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