

The Observatory- Summer Solstice 2018

We are nearly at the threshold of the delightful summer season once again. At 10:07 AM UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) – 03:07 AM PST—June 21, the Summer Solstice will be officially upon us, ushering in a period of celebration of life's goodness and generosity. As Nature commands, it seems fitting that this time of enjoyment should begin with the longest day of the year when the Sun reaches its highest declination and the Earth "bows" before Surya's power. On this day, the faintest shadow occurs and our world is bathed in bright heavenly light again for the longest time. Attuning our consciousness to the divine light during this time reawakens our "inner sun".

Solstice is also known as Midsummer because, in the months preceding it, Nature has been slowly awakening from its long winter slumber before it peaks gloriously in the midpoint of the season. By turn, summer derives from the Proto-Indo-European *sam* or *sem* meaning together or one. Thus, a celebration is in order, if not for the sake of all that it entails, but as a prompting that the season is short-lived.

The most distinguishing feature of the Summer Solstice is the direct opposite aspect that the Sun will be receiving from Saturn, which adds a tinge of austerity to it. Because Saturn is all about responsibility, this can be seen as a reminder that Nature's gifts must be enjoyed with responsibility and not be taken for granted. Also, Saturn's quality of quietness seems to prompt and further emphasize the Sun's (Sol) stillness (sistere), hence Solstice.

As celestial escorts to the Solstice, several planets will make their presence felt by being in retrograde motion on that day and throughout the entire season. Mars will be retrograde in Capricorn—its sign of exaltation--conjoining Ketu on June 28 where they will stay until August 26. Mars is in the Uttarashada Nakshatra, which is ruled by the Sun. Mars benefits from the attributes of the Solstice super star and that indicates higher energetic activity and initiative but also a need to introspect due to Ketu's influence.

Mars conjunct Ketu in Capricorn will be opposing Venus conjunct Rahu in Cancer up to July 4, 2018 signaling a need for reorganizing relationships and finances. Mercury joins this planetary cluster in June where it will stay through July 6, before it enters Cancer and makes a conjunction with Rahu. This conjunction lasts for the entire month of July, further amplifying and accelerating all types of communications.

On July 10, Jupiter resumes its direct motion in Libra making a 9th house aspect to the Sun in the constellation of Gemini suggesting that communications and relationships will continue to be central to the agenda.

Lastly, Saturn will be opposing the Sun until July 16, when the latter enters Cancer and receives a direct opposition from Mars and Ketu. Interestingly, Ketu seems to play a pervading role from July 20 through August 2 as it is present in several planetary placements. For example, Saturn's long stint in Ketu-ruled Moola Nakshatra; Ketu, conjunct Mars, making a 7th house aspect on the Sun conjunct Rahu --both in Saturn-ruled Pushya Nakshatra--complete the cycle of this planetary dance for that period.

The planetary positions at the start of this quarter are:

Sun is in Gemini, Mrigashira nakshatra; Mercury is in Gemini, Punarvasu nakshatra; Rahu is in Cancer, Punarvasu nakshatra; Venus is in Cancer, Pushya nakshatra; Jupiter is in Libra, retrograde, in Swati nakshatra; Saturn is in Sagittarius, retrograde, in Mula nakshatra; Mars and Ketu are in Capricorn, Shravana nakshatra.

Planetary ingresses and aspects:

JUNE

21 Venus opposite Mars
23 Mercury opposite Pluto
25 Mercury enters Cancer
26 Mars turns retrograde
27/28 Full Moon in Moola nakshatra
27 Sun opposite Saturn

JULY

4 Venus enters Leo
5 Jupiter trine Sun; Mercury opposite Mars
10 Jupiter resumes direct motion
12 New Moon – partial Solar eclipse in Punarvasu; Sun opposite Pluto
16 Sun enters Cancer
24 Venus opposite Neptune
26 Mercury stationary retrograde in Cancer; Sun opposite Mars
27 Total Lunar eclipse, in Shravana nakshatra. This is an exceptionally long eclipse, almost 6 hours in duration, from penumbra to penumbra.

AUGUST

1 Venus enters Virgo – sign of its debilitation
8 Mercury conjunct Sun.
9 Saturn 10th house from Venus
10/11 New Moon in Ashlesha nakshatra, Partial Solar eclipse
12/13 Perseids meteor showers – around 40 per hour, after midnight
16 Sun enters Leo
19 Mercury resumes direct motion
25 Full Moon in Dhanishta nakshatra
27 Mars resumes direct motion

SEPTEMBER

1 Venus enters Libra
2 Mercury enters Leo
6 Saturn stationary direct
7 Sun opposite Neptune
8 Moon occults Mercury
9 New Moon in Uttara Phalguni nakshatra
12 Venus opposite Uranus. (Ganesha, patron of Jyotisha, birthday)
13 Mercury opposite Neptune

16 Sun enters Virgo

18 Mercury enters Virgo, sign of its exaltation; Mars square Uranus

20 Mercury conjunct Sun

23 Autumnal Equinox; Saturn 10th house aspect to Mercury