

The Promise of Easter

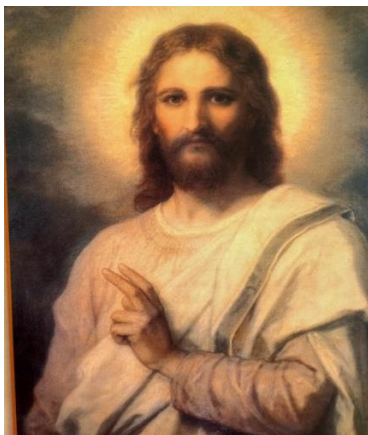


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Easter is a time of rebirth that reminds us of the transformative power of forgiveness, which flows unceasingly from the Divine's everlasting, unconditional love. What a magnificent gift we can give to ourselves by opening up to love and spiritually awakening at this blessed time!

Drawing from the teachings and wisdom of the great avatar Paramahansa Yogananda, we learn that the celebration of Easter is a sacred time to gain fresh upliftment from the ancient yogic practice of forgiveness. This can be life-transforming because it blesses us with feelings of deep relaxation, forbearance, compassion, and a "peace beyond understanding."

At this time of the year, it's uplifting to read Yogananda's writings on the hidden meaning of the gospel, particularly Jesus's words on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" as an expression of the "mightiest miracle of love." Even under challenging and painful circumstances, we can choose to forgive others and elevate ourselves to a higher sphere of awareness. Easter is the perfect time to put this into practice.



Yogananda articulated this principle beautifully when he said: "The more one establishes one's identity with the Absolute and never deems himself a sinner, the more he will feel God's mercy. Love for God, surrender to God, will destroy in man the karma of ignorance. Pure love, divine love, removes the barriers between man and his Maker. [...] Regardless of the intensity of his failings, when man turns his

mind within and sincerely seeks and finally attains God's bliss and love templated in the soul, he does not have to undergo the suffering linked to his previous sensory attachments." (*The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You*, Volume I, by Paramahansa Yogananda. Copyright © Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles).

These exhortations remind us that forgiveness is the key to inner peace and joy. The *Bhagavad Gita* identifies forgiveness as one of the noble qualities of the soul. The Mahabharata states that "one should forgive regardless of the injury." The sacred teachings of all religions assert that forgiveness is essential for personal growth. The beauty and compassion in the idea that forgiveness is central to the universe's evolution is so profound that it's no surprise Easter is a sacred event meant to remind us of our true nature and purpose here on Earth.

Embrace the Full Moon on April 12, a time of renewal and fulfillment as we honor both Passover and Easter.

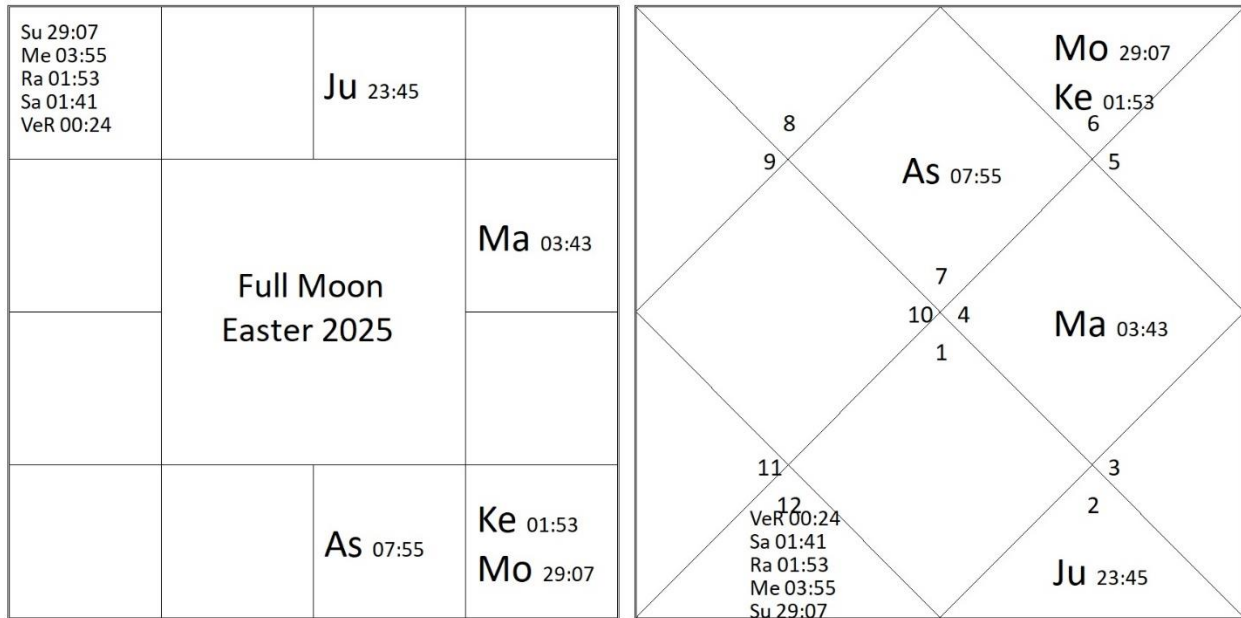
The date of Easter is shaped by the wonders of the astronomical cosmos, utilizing the 19-year Metonic cycle. This celestial event is calculated based on the spring equinox and the full moon, the latter happening before Easter. Thus, the celebration of Easter is intertwined with the timing of this full moon, a reminder that each year brings its own unique rhythm, since the equinox and full moon don't align on the same dates. The full moon that graces us on or after the spring equinox is referred to as the *Paschal* full moon. "Paschalis" is an old Latin word signifying "relating to Easter," later transliterated as *Pasqua* in Italian, *Paque* in French, and *Pascoa* in Portuguese and Spanish.

Another spelling variant is *Pesach* or Passover. Passover *seder* is a Jewish observance commemorating the Exodus and the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Coincidentally, this year Passover commences before sundown on Saturday, April 12, and ends after nightfall on April 20. There's a meaningful connection among various Christian and non-Christian religions in the celebration of this sacred holiday through the life of Jesus, who celebrated the last Passover with his disciples, known as the Last Supper. I wish all a peaceful, and joyful observance of these sacred periods.

The Vedic festival of *Chaitra Purnima* marks the full moon in the month of *Chaitra*. This year, it will be celebrated on April 12 around the world. *Chaitra Purnima* marks the first full moon of the Vedic Lunar New Year in the Hindu calendar. *Chaitra Purnima* is considered a sacred and auspicious day in Hinduism, when many gods and goddesses are worshipped.

In some sects, *Chaitra Purnima* is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Lord Hanuman – a half-human half-monkey Hindu god who personifies agility, flexibility, strength and, above all, devotion, the "secret" ingredient for attaining God-realization. Many devotees observe a fast on *Chaitra Purnima*, and some participate in cultural festivals. Meditation and prayers on this holy day can also lead to inner peace, good health, and divine blessings.

The full moon will culminate at the close of *Purnima Tithi* on April 12, at 8:22 PM EDT (April 13 at 00:22 UTC). The astrological chart cast for this special full moon contains important information to help guide us as we move forward in the coming year.



A super-charged planetary fan in Pisces in Purva Bhadrapada, Uttara Bhadrapada, and Revati led by the full moon in Virgo in Hasta Nakshatra – Expansion by letting go.

In the full moon chart for April 12 (above), the Moon occupies the 29th degree of Virgo and is positioned opposite a group of five *grahas* (planets) in the spiritual sign of Pisces: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Rahu, and Saturn. A stellium of four or more visible planets in one sign forms a *Pravrajya* yoga, a pattern with spiritual connotations.

The opposition between the full Moon and the stellium forms a fan shape, a pattern defined by western astrology. According to astrologer Cerena Childress, an isolated planet often exhibits dominance in the fan configuration and possesses special potency. Here, the Moon stands virtually alone in Virgo, associated only with Ketu, which is significant both from a practical and a spiritual point of view.

However, the association with Ketu may not be as foreboding as it appears for the Moon, though it can signify emotional conflicts. This is because Ketu and the Moon are moving away from each other following the eclipse in Virgo on March 14. This represents detachment and letting go of what has passed. Some also consider Ketu exalted in Virgo, which frees the Moon from its influence. The practical message of the Moon's placement at the tail end of Virgo is that we must consider our actions in order to have both purpose and skills to cope with life's challenges, lest we be caught by delusion and mirages (as with the Moon's opposition from Rahu and Mercury in Pisces).

As the fan's rudder in Pisces – the sign of boundless expansion and compassion – the Moon in Virgo instigates the need for selfless service to others performed with a purity of intention without expectation of anything in return. As a result, one enjoys inner peace and the purification of negative karma. This is the essence of Lord Hanuman's gift on *Chaitra Purnima*, that of karma yoga, the path of unselfish action.



Exalted Venus – the spiritual lessons of unconditional love and forgiveness



Saturn at Pisces 01:41 – this is a serious matter

An exalted Venus in Pisces, as we see in this *Chaitra* full Moon chart, embodies the peak of creativity and soul expression. Positioned at 00PI24, Venus will drive the current planetary alignment. Venus is stationary direct in this chart (it will move forward 40 minutes after the full Moon, after having been retrograde for the past 42 days). This means that it will be incredibly bright and auspicious.

In a spiritual context, Venus symbolizes expansion without boundaries, as well as our capacity for connection, devotion, understanding, and tolerance. When we truly open our hearts to the Venus-in-Pisces energies of expansion and interconnectedness, our capacity to endure grows, and starts vibrating in all our relationships, expanding our capacity to understand and sympathize.

Sometimes, it's natural for experiences and memories of the past to resurface, so the potential for the coming months could be quite emotional. We should be ready to shed tears – whether from gratitude, emotion, or even regret! This wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, since tears can wash away things that have served their purpose.

The significance of the Pisces stellium is highlighted by the presence of Saturn, often referred to as the universe's *gravibus doctorem* (severe teacher). Saturn urges us to make a long-term commitment to renounce past habits and behavioral patterns that hinder our ability to solicit and offer forgiveness, ultimately guiding us toward peace. In Sanskrit, "Shanti" means peace, while "Shani" refers to Saturn. Notably, the word "Shani" is contained within "Shanti," suggesting that to achieve peace, we must embrace discipline and adhere to universal law, complemented by sincere devotion.



Paramahansa Yogananda seems to be deciphering the current starry opposition between Virgo and Pisces when he explains: "Shallow prayer and selfish fear of consequences will not cause God arbitrarily to contradict the just and sanctioned working of His karmic law. [...] The devotee who seeks redemption by attuning his actions to the righteous guidance of divine law, and also implores with pure devotion and faith the unconditional love of God, will be transformed in God's light of forgiveness. Any sin, and its consequence, can be forgiven the repentant devotee who loves God deeply enough, and thereby puts his life in tune with the all-compassionate Lord. Love is greater than law; it is the unifying thread that attaches the devotee's heart to the unconditional heart of God." (*The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You*, Volume I, by Paramahansa Yogananda)

The words of this great teacher point out the way to make the most of the potential promised by the Moon in Virgo and the stellium in Pisces. Applying this precious guidance will take us to a point where we will rediscover peace and beauty at every moment, in every encounter of our lives. Echoing the essence of Easter, this energy signifies the soul-satisfying love and harmony that arise when we seek forgiveness and surrender. Such concentrated energy acts as a cleansing force in the area of life represented by the house occupied by Pisces in your chart.

This year, Easter may represent the moment to let the oceanic waters of Pisces wash away everything that doesn't contribute to our inner peace, happiness, and the freedom we truly seek. If our intentions are pure, sincere, and committed, the transformations that occur in our lives will permanently alter how we interact with others and the world around us. Those around us will take notice, and as a result, our lives will become much happier and brighter.

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