



## Sun, Planets and Transitions

The **Sun** will be in Aries, the Ram (*Mesha*) on 1 May. Its angular diameter will be 31'45". The Sun moves to Taurus, the Bull (*Vrushabha*), on 14 May. Its angular diameter decreases by 12 seconds to 31'33" on 31 May.

Four naked-eye planets, viz. **Mercury**, **Venus**, **Mars** and **Saturn** are in the pre-dawn sky above the eastern horizon. Mars and Saturn are moving westwards; they will be seen climbing above the eastern horizon. Mercury reaches its maximum western elongation of 26.4° on 10 May. After that it will move towards the eastern horizon. Venus is presently almost out of sight, being just about 10° west of the Sun on 1 May, and this angle will keep decreasing. It will be in conjunction with the Sun next month.

**Jupiter** is moving towards the Sun, but it is moving westwards. It will be in conjunction with the Sun on 18 May.

Therefore, by mid-May we will be left with only Mars and Saturn in the pre-dawn sky.

**Mercury** will be in Pisces, the Fishes (*Meena*) on 1 May. It will cross over to Cetus, the Whale (*Timingal*) on 18 May, and then to Taurus on 20 May.

**Venus** will be in Aries on 1 May and will move to Taurus on 18 May.

**Mars** will be in Pisces on 1 May. It crosses over to Cetus on 10 May and will then re-enter Pisces on 13 May.

**Jupiter** and **Saturn** remain in Taurus and Aquarius, the Water-bearer (*Kumbha*) respectively.

### List of Events in May 2024 (Time in IST)

Dt	Dy	Time	Event
01	We	16:57	Last quarter
04	Sa	03:56	Moon-Saturn: 0.8° N
05	Sa	00:38	Neptune 0.2° N of Moon
05	Su	01:28	Eta Aquarid shower: ZHR = 60
05	Su	07:46	Moon-Mars: 0.2° S
06	Mo	03:24	Moon ascending node
06	Mo	03:41	Moon perigee: 363200 km
06	Mo	13:55	Moon-Mercury: 3.8° S
07	Tu	19:03	Venus 3.2° S of Moon
08	We	08:52	New Moon
10	Fr	02:29	Mercury elongation: 26.4° W
11	Sa	13:15	Moon north declination: 28.5° N
13	Mo	03:47	Moon-Pollux: 1.7° N
13	Mo	16:15	Uranus conjunction
14	Tu	04:17	Moon-Beehive: 3.7° S
15	We	17:18	First quarter
16	Th	03:47	Regulus 3.2° S of Moon
18	Sa	00:30	Moon apogee: 404600 km
18	Sa	17:26	Venus 0.4° S of Uranus
18	Sa	23:32	Jupiter conjunction
19	Su	22:05	Moon descending node
20	Mo	14:50	Moon-Spica: 1.5° S
23	Th	13:38	Venus 0.2° N of Jupiter
23	Th	19:23	Full Moon
24	Fr	08:01	Moon-Antares: 0.4° S
26	Su	01:28	Moon south declination: 28.4° S
30	Th	22:43	Last quarter
31	Fr	13:31	Moon-Saturn: 0.4° N
31	Fr	12:55	Mercury 1.3° S of Uranus

*(Disclaimer: we categorically mention here that we do not believe in astrology and believe that the only influence a planet has on us is to give us the viewing pleasure of its beauty. The sole purpose of giving the transition of planets and the Sun is to acquaint the reader with the Indian nomenclature of planets and constellations and also to show that the actual positions of*

the Sun and planets, which are based on modern computing, are very different from those given in astrology tables.)

## March of the Moon

The month begins with the Moon in last quarter. On 4 May the Moon will be south-east of Saturn; the next day on 5 May it will be almost due south of Mars. There will be an occultation of Saturn and Mars by the Moon, but these events will not be visible from India.

On 6 May the thin lunar crescent will be right above Mercury. On 10 May, the lunar crescent, now above the western horizon, can be seen right below  $\beta$  Tauri or Elnath (or Alnath, meaning 'butting' by the Bull's horns). Elnath is the second brightest star in Taurus, the Bull (*Vrushabha*). It is called *Agni* in Indian astronomy; it is at the northern tip of the horns of the Bull.

The Moon enters the Gateway of Heaven on 12 May and passes less than  $4^\circ$  from the Beehive or Praesepe cluster on 14 May. This cluster is the 8th nakshatra, *Pushya* of Indian astronomy.

First quarter will be on 15 May; on this night the Moon will pass close to Regulus, which is in the 10th nakshatra, *Magha*. On 20 May, the Moon will be seen east of Spica (*Chitra*). On 23 May, the Full Moon rises inside the claws of Scorpio (*Vrushchika*). On 31 May the Moon can be seen above Saturn.

## Eta Aquariids

Serious amateur astronomers should try to

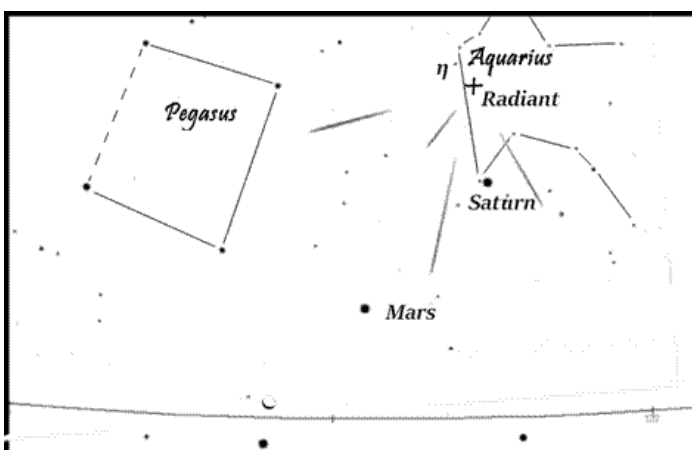
observe the Eta Aquariid meteor shower during the first weekend of May. If you did not observe Halley's Comet when it last went by the Earth in 1986, or don't expect to see it in 2061 when it returns, then the best option is to observe this meteor shower. The Eta Aquariid meteor shower arises due to the entry into the Earth's atmosphere of debris left by Halley's Comet. The debris burns up due to friction with the constituent particles of the atmosphere.

The meteors of this shower are very swift, travelling at a speed of about 65.5 kilometers per second. The shower is active between 19 April and 28 May every year. It is presently active and expected to peak around 2.30 am on 6 May, two days before New Moon.

Sky enthusiasts should attempt to observe this shower for two reasons: (a) Predictions show that due to the interaction of the debris of Halley's Comet with Jupiter, the shower is likely to be strong in 2024. (b) Some meteors leave behind persistent trains of smoke trails that can last several seconds. Fireballs are not seen with this shower.

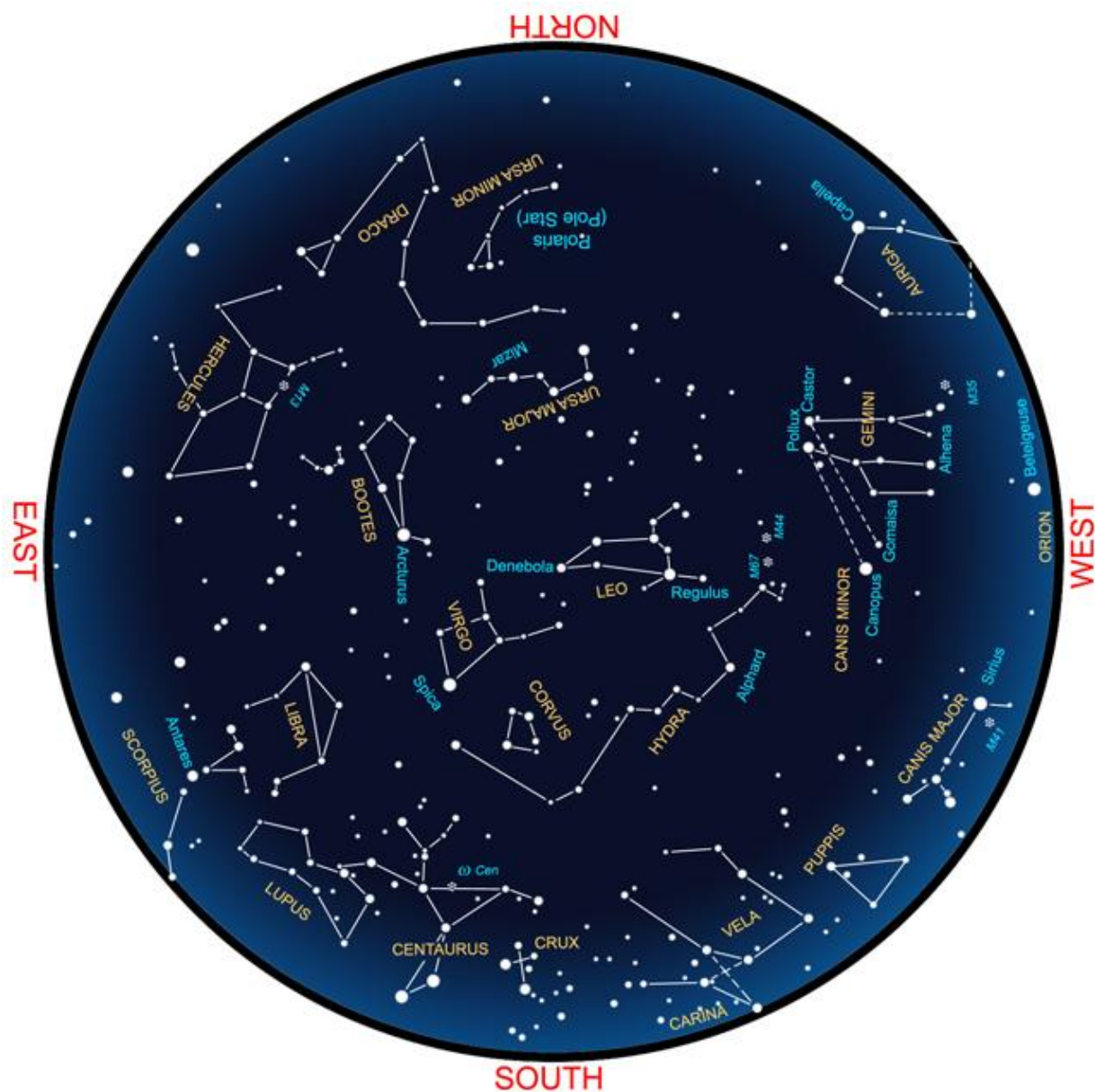
The radiant of the Eta Aquariid shower rises about three and a half hours before local sunrise. It reaches well above the horizon in about two hours. In order to observe any meteor shower, it is advisable to look about  $20-40^\circ$  away from the radiant. About 30 meteors per hour may be seen in this shower.

For more information on observing meteor showers, please visit <https://skytonight.wordpress.com/wish-upon-a-shooting-star/>.



← Radiant of Eta Aquariids about 90 minutes before sunrise. The radiant will be about  $10^\circ$  above Saturn. Mars will also be about  $10^\circ$  above the eastern horizon. The thin lunar crescent will be just above the horizon. The star  $\eta$  (Eta) Aquarius is shown in the picture.

**This sky map for May is drawn for mid-northern latitudes,  
to be used around 9:30 p.m. local time**



For notes on stargazing [click here](#).

Or visit <https://skytonight.wordpress.com/monthly-sky-notes-and-links/>

**Acknowledgements:**

<http://www.lunar-occultations.com/iota/occult4.htm>

by Dave Herald for International Occultation Timing Association.

<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SKYCAL/SKYCAL.html> by Fred Espenak and Sumit Dutta.

Graphics using GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP) a cross-platform image editor.

<https://www.gimp.org/>

**These pages are contributed by:**

Arvind Paranjpye (paranjpye.arvind@gmail.com) (<http://arvindparanjpye.blogspot.com/>) and Anjaneer Rao (rao.anjaneer@gmail.com)