

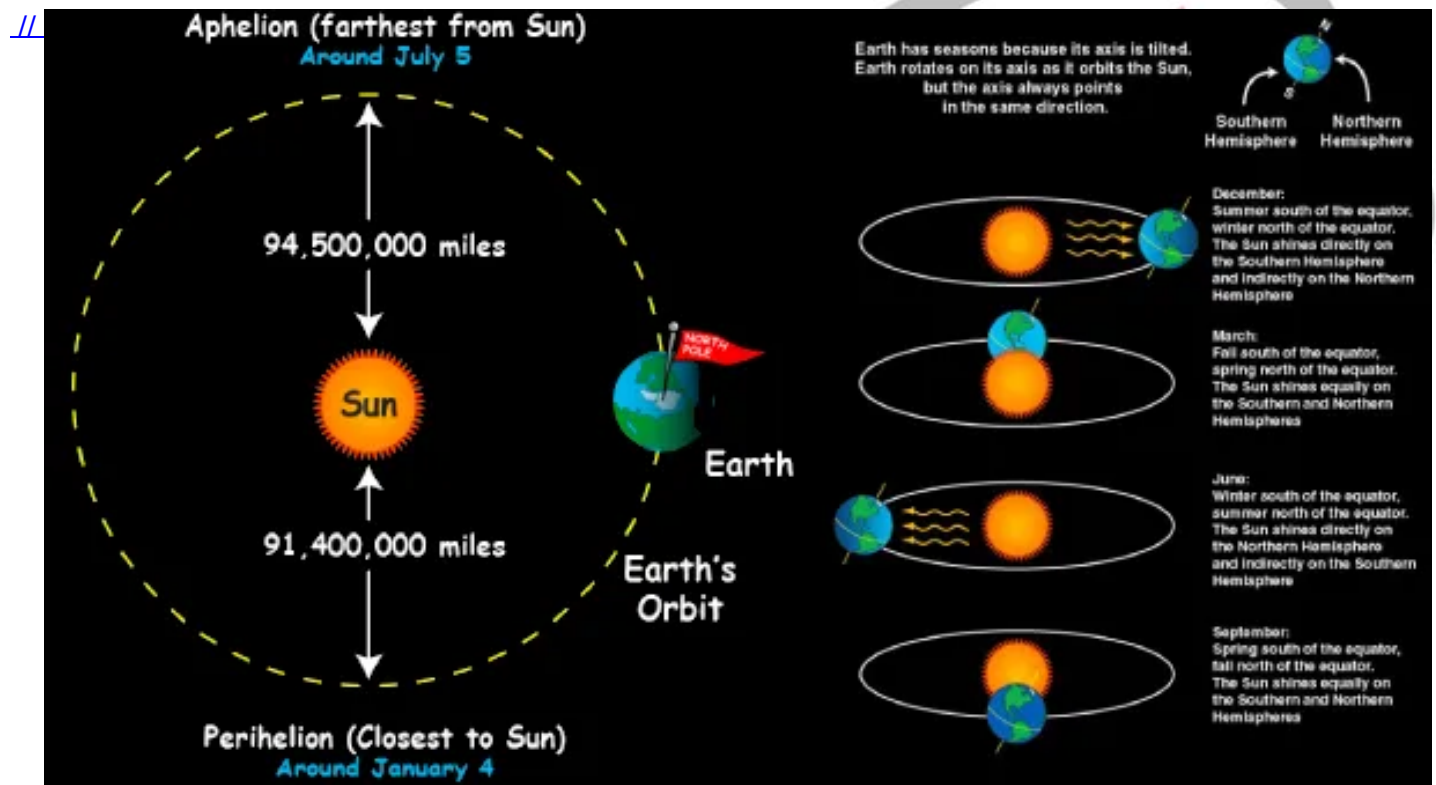


# Aphelion

[Source: IE](#)

## Why in News?

Recently, on **5th July 2024**, Earth reached the **farthest point in its elliptical orbit** around the sun called **aphelion**. Earth moves around the sun in elliptical orbit and thus its distance from the sun fluctuates slightly throughout the year.



## What is Aphelion?

- **About:** Aphelion refers to the point in Earth's orbit when it is farthest from the Sun, occurring around 3 to 6th July each year (According to NCERT, Aphelion is on 4<sup>th</sup> July).
  - The Earth's perihelion and aphelion **dates are not fixed** due to **variations in its orbit eccentricity**.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Distance(in AU)</u>
Aphelion	2015	Jul 6/1940 UT	1.0166
Perihelion	2016	Jan 2/22:49 UT	0.9833
Aphelion	2016	Jul 4/16:24 UT	1.0168
Perihelion	2017	Jan 4/14:18 UT	0.9833
Aphelion	2017	Jul 3/20:11 UT	1.0167
Perihelion	2018	Jan 3/5:35 UT	0.9832
Aphelion	2018	Jul 6/16:47 UT	1.0167
Perihelion	2019	Jan 3/5:20 UT	0.9833
Aphelion	2019	Jul 4/22:11 UT	1.0168
Perihelion	2020	Jan 5/7:48UT	0.9832
Aphelion	2020	Jul 4/11:35 UT	1.0167

- At this juncture, the distance between Earth and the Sun extends to approximately **152.5 million kilometres**.
- **Perihelion: At Perihelion, Earth is closest to the Sun, occurring around January 3 annually, with a distance of approximately 147.5 million kilometres.**

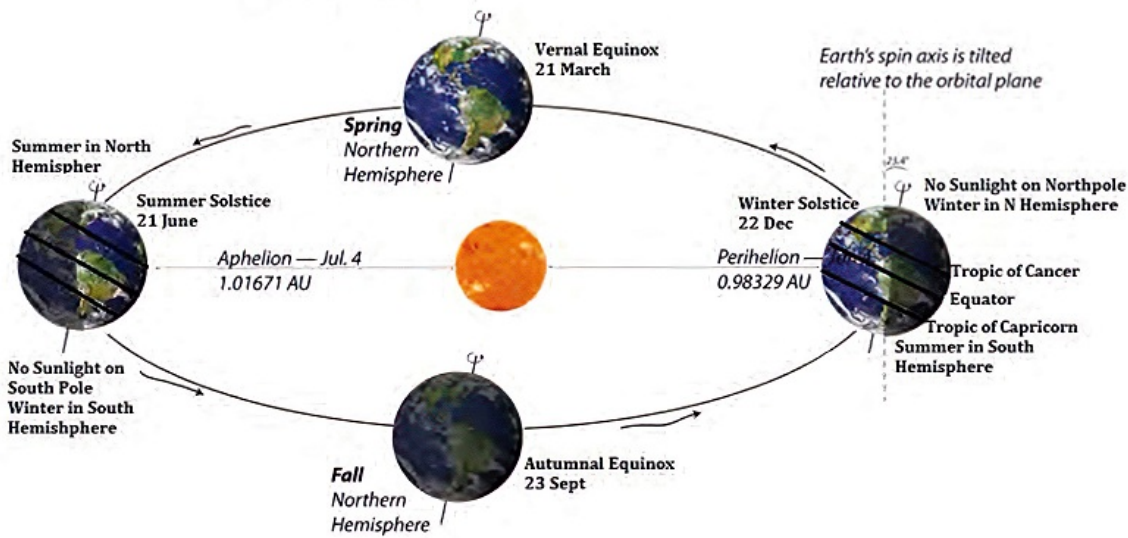
▪ Significance of Aphelion:

- **Variation in Solar Radiation:** During early July, Earth's aphelion slightly reduces the sunlight reaching India, but this has a **minor impact on temperatures**.
  - **Seasonal changes**, due to Earth's tilt, are much more important. The **difference in solar radiation** caused by Earth's elliptical orbit is only about **3%**, showing that seasonal factors are the main influence on India's temperatures, even at aphelion.
- **Stability of the Orbit: The aphelion is a natural consequence of Earth's elliptical orbit, which is a result of the gravitational interactions between the planets. Maintaining this slightly elliptical orbit is crucial for the long-term stability of the Earth's climate and habitability.**

**Note**

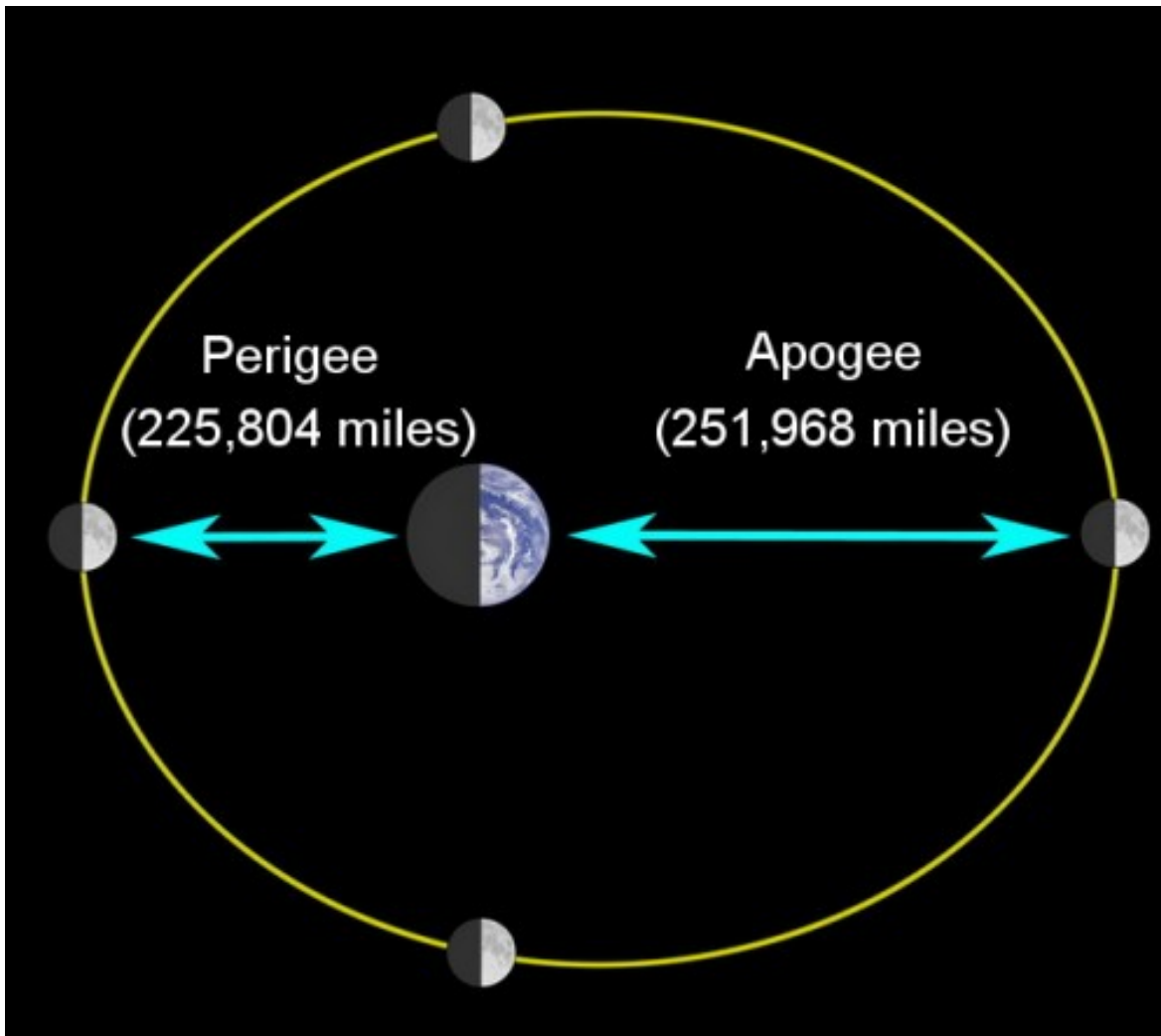
- The **Earth's seasons are primarily determined by the tilt of the Earth's axis**, not the distance from the Sun.
- The **Earth's tilt causes the uneven distribution of solar radiation**, leading to the four seasons: **spring, summer, fall (autumn), and winter**.

## Earth's Orbit, Axial Tilt, and the Seasons



## Perigee and Apogee

- **Perigee** is the point in the **moon's elliptical orbit** that is **closest to the Earth**. At perigee, the moon is at its **smallest apparent size** and its **gravitational pull on the Earth is strongest**.
- Apogee is the point in the moon's elliptical orbit that is **farthest from the Earth**. At apogee, the **moon is at its largest apparent size** and its **gravitational pull on the Earth is weakest**.



Read More: [Types of Orbit](#)

### UPSC Civil Services, Previous Years Questions (PYQ)

**Q. On 21st June, the Sun (2019)**

- (a) does not set below the horizon at the Arctic Circle
- (b) does not set below the horizon at Antarctic Circle
- (c) shines vertically overhead at noon on the Equator
- (d) shines vertically overhead at the Tropic of Capricorn

**Ans: (a)**