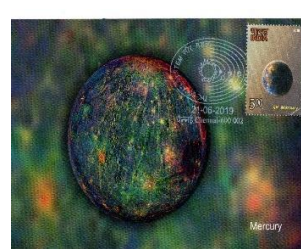
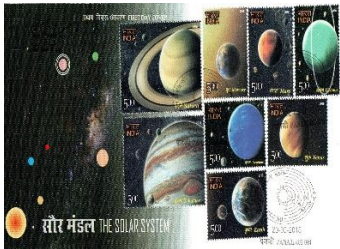


Our Solar System

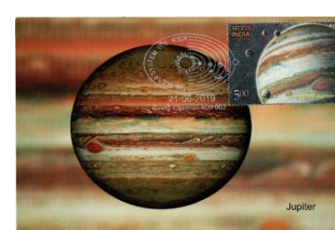
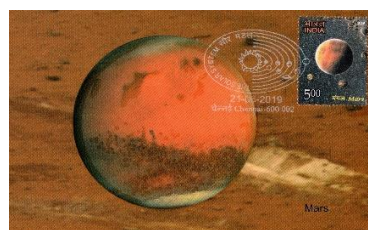
M.R.Ramesh Kumar, PhD

Our solar system consists of our star, the Sun, and everything bound to it by gravity – the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune; dwarf planets such as Pluto; dozens of moons; and millions of asteroids, comets, and meteoroids. A First Day Cover with the entire set of 8 stamps of the solar system along with the 8 maxi cards, of the various planets are attached herewith released by the India Posts, Government of India.

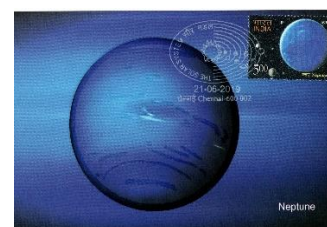
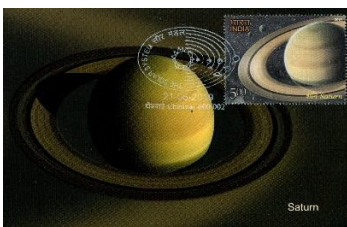
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A Sun temple, Konark stamp. Our Sun is a 4.5 billion-year-old star – a hot glowing ball of hydrogen and helium at the center of our solar system. The Sun is about 93 million miles (150 million kilometers) from Earth, and without its energy, life as we know it could not exist here on our home planet. The Sun is the largest object in our solar system. The smallest planet in our solar system and nearest to the Sun, Mercury is only slightly larger than Earth's Moon. Venus is the second planet from the Sun and is Earth's closest planetary neighbor. It's one of the four inner, terrestrial (or rocky) planets.



Our home planet, Earth is the third planet from the Sun, and the only place we know of so far that's inhabited by living things. While Earth is only the fifth largest planet in the solar system, it is the only world in our solar system with liquid water on the surface. Just slightly larger than nearby Venus, Earth is the biggest of the four planets closest to the Sun, all of which are made of rock and metal. Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun – a dusty, cold, desert world with a very thin atmosphere. Mars is also a dynamic planet with seasons, polar ice caps, canyons, extinct volcanoes, and evidence that it was even more active in the past. Jupiter has a long history of surprising scientists – all the way back to 1610 when Galileo Galilei found the first moons beyond Earth. That discovery changed the way we see the universe. Fifth in line from the Sun, Jupiter is, by far, the largest planet in the solar system – more than twice as massive as all the other planets combined.



Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun and the second-largest planet in our solar system. Adorned with thousands of beautiful ringlets, Saturn is unique among the planets. It is not the only planet to have rings – made of chunks of ice and rock – but none are as spectacular or as complicated as Saturn's. Like fellow gas giant Jupiter, Saturn is a massive ball made mostly of hydrogen and helium.

Pluto is a dwarf planet in the Kuiper Belt, a donut-shaped region of icy bodies beyond the orbit of Neptune. There may be millions of these icy objects, collectively referred to as Kuiper Belt objects (KBOs) or trans-Neptunian objects (TNOs), in this distant region of our solar system. Our Milky Way galaxy is just one of the billions of galaxies in the universe. Within it, there are at least 100 billion stars, and on average, each star has at least one planet orbiting it. This means there are potentially thousands of planetary systems like our solar system within the galaxy!