



**KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY**  
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# Geminid Meteor Shower

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## Context?

- The **Geminid meteor shower** is considered the **brightest and most reliable annual meteor shower**. Visible **globally**, it peaks in **mid-December**, offering spectacular night-sky displays.

## Key Features

### 1. Active Period

- Begins: Early December
- Ends: Mid-December
- Peak: **13–14 December**

### 1. Radiant Point

- The meteors appear to emanate from the **constellation Gemini**, near the star **Castor**.
- This gives the shower its name: **“Geminids”**.

### 1. Parent Body: 3200 Phaethon

- Unusual origin: Unlike most meteor showers originating from **icy comets**, the Geminids come from a **rocky asteroid**.
- Often called a **“Rock Comet”**: Phaethon sheds material due to **thermal fracturing** when it passes close to the Sun.

### 1. Meteor Characteristics

- Bright and fast-moving meteors
- Yellowish color
- Peak rates: **~120 meteors per hour** during optimal viewing

## Scientific Understanding of Meteors

- **Meteor:** The streak of light seen when a **meteoroid** enters Earth’s atmosphere and burns due to friction.
- **Meteoroid:** Space rock ranging from **dust grains to small asteroids**

**Kamaraj IAS Academy**

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477** / Whatsapp : **09710729833**

- **Meteorite:** A meteoroid that **survives atmospheric entry** and reaches the Earth's surface.