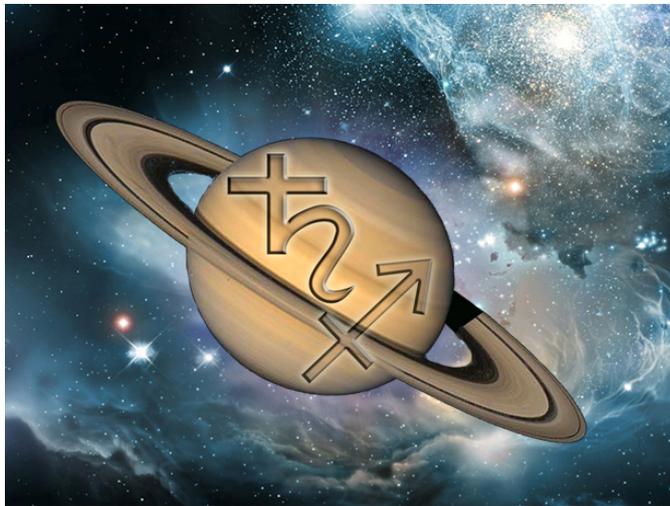


## Year Ahead 2017



The biggest shift in 2017 is **Saturn going into Sagittarius** on January 27 taking us from the intensity of Scorpio to more international and philosophical territory. Saturn was last in Sag' from 1987 to 1990, in the Gorbachev era at the end of the Cold War, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 9th 1989 (the other 9/11). This was a very Jupiterian time for

the world, with Uranus and Neptune joining Saturn in Sag', and by now it is viewed as a watershed that was scarcely believable for those living through it. The promised peace dividend did not filter down to the people, but it is hoped the current ceasefire in Syria is an omen of similar miraculous things to come in 2017.

Saturn is the outermost of the seven classical planets and its status as the Dweller on the Threshold (of the visible and invisible worlds) lies at the heart of its symbolism. Saturn rules skeletons and structure, form and the formal, and it creates solid objects and leaves behind tangible results. It is the **Lord of the Door** and our journey through its portal comes at particular seven-year crises/ rites of passage which fall naturally in its 29-year orbit. Modern Western astrology dramatizes the Outer Planets, which are major generational agents of change, but Saturn's two-and-a-half years per sign is more immediate and

influential, in all representing the biggest life class we face at any given time.

In Greek mythology, Saturn was ambitious and responsible, and he castrated his tyrannical father Uranus to usurp his position as **King of the Gods**. Yet Saturn also assumed everyone else was on the make, and his projection of this opportunistic shadow meant he lived in paranoiac fear that his own children would in turn emasculate him. So he ate them, pre-emptively. This created a backlash, resulting in coup cooked up between his resentful wife Rhea and his son Jupiter, who eventually struck his father down and deposed him as Olympian King. Saturn's worst fears were neatly realized, and he brought them on himself. This is a simple Karmic morality tale, though on a subtler level shows how our deepest fears manifest, despite – or precisely because of – our avoidance/coping strategies.



Saturn/Chronos rules chronology and the Sun is our major cosmic time keeper, so **Saturn-Sun transits** especially make time itself feel very precious. There is a ratio of achievement to time available as we realise we can't do it all in a day. Saturn is the **Lord of Karma**, and also governs agriculture – we reap what we sow. Clearing a higher bar also means bigger rewards, and we get stuff we wouldn't have volunteered for, yet afterwards admit grudgingly the experience was necessary. A make-or-break experience is common, where success comes through sustained elbow grease or else we shelve the Big Plan for not being worth the trouble. Don't judge yourself in any case, but remember Saturn is all about wisdom and balance – too much one way or

the other isn't healthy. We strike a **middle way**, which is why Saturn exalts in Libra, the sign of the Scales.

Saturn hovers around the first degree of Sagittarius for two weeks in February as it prepares to go retrograde, and returns for another fortnight in May. It **stations at 3° Sagittarius** for two months between March 9th and May 6th, which will be pretty onerous for birthdays December 18th – 19th. (Listen up, Brad Pitt, Alexis Sanchez, Jake Gyllenhaal, Steven Spielberg, Keith Richards, Christine Aguilera). This is

a long two month spell for sure; testing, tiring, frustrating, and occasionally morale-sapping, with scrutiny from the boss, overbearing deadlines, rickety job security, and a sense of constructing your world from the ground upwards. There is an opportunity for promotion, to become an expert and to prove your worth, but take care of your knees and lower back!

Saturn retrogrades on April 6th 2017 and on June 22nd dips back into Scorpio. Then on August 25th it goes direct once more at 27° Scorpio, and by October 27th returns into Sagittarius. Saturn's transit from Scorpio to Sagittarius is also a passage across nakshatras, from Jyeshtha to Mula – the so-called **Gandanta Knot** which extends 3° either side of the water-to-fire crossover point. The change from **Jyeshtha to Mula** is said to be particularly volatile, and between a radically new Sheriff in Washington and general rising world consciousness, next year will see big transitions, particularly around the time of Saturn's station on or about the Galactic Centre.

People with planets and points in Gemini will also have 'the Saturns' in 2017-19, and to some extent Pisces and Virgo patriots too. Saturn opposing a natal planet can be every bit as tough as a conjunction, with the emphasis being more on relationship or 'self versus action'. Rather than a new beginning, oppositions are the critical halfway stage, a **symbolic Full Moon**, where we either reap rewards of actions already begun, or realize we want something else and have to adjust. This may be stressful either way – successful or not - but again, knowing when to walk away is key.

The *good news* is for those with **Leo and Aries** planets who get a nice supportive trine from Saturn. You can work steadily, make smart choices and have a strong sense of direction, and you don't have to compromise or second-guess. Consolidate, but don't coast, and take advantage of the boss giving you extra leeway. **Libra and Aquarius** have an affinity with Saturn in any case and planets in these signs also do well during the Sagittarius period until January 2020.

So look for the exact degree of your Sagittarius (and Gemini) planets, which may receive **three separate passes**; two direct and one retrograde. There's no telling which of these three will be toughest, though one is likely to stand out, with the others either echoing or foreshadowing the issues. The good news is once Saturn moves even one degree away, the pressure lifts off as if a switch has been thrown. The clouds part and the Sun comes out again, and you can keep your

game face on for a finite time. This is the beauty of knowing astrology: time itself has qualities and characteristics, and we get inner peace from knowing *tough periods don't last*.



Yoga asanas - **suryanamaskar** especially - are good for Saturn, slow, deliberate and disciplined, which bring flexibility and strength. Regular Ayurvedic *abhyanga* massage is beneficial too, again particularly on Saturdays – warm, viscous oil is the opposite of the cold, rigid Vata Saturn influence. Saturn rules joint and bone pain – the skeleton – especially at times of great stress, while sesame oil in the scalp also helps keep grey hairs away. Wearing a gemstone – blue sapphire - *is not for everyone* and depends on your natal chart: consult your Vedic astrologer. While Saturn transits are notorious for pressure of work, the opposite tack – taking a holiday – is an effective antidote. Putting deadlines to one side and simply being somewhere *sunny* acts against dark, oppressive energy and offers a new perspective.

Some people like Saturn because it is straightforward and rewards effort. Fair enough. Find something intrinsically meaningful and become an expert: you'll be working hard in any event, so at least do something you can relate to. But don't be fooled that Saturn is mundane and straightforward: it is also the ruler of fate, the Anglo-Saxon equivalent for which is **wyrd**. Saturn can be spookily weird and metaphysical. Lessons that feel preordained and outside our control crop up repeatedly to the extent to which we avoid them. This is **Parabdha Karma**, that

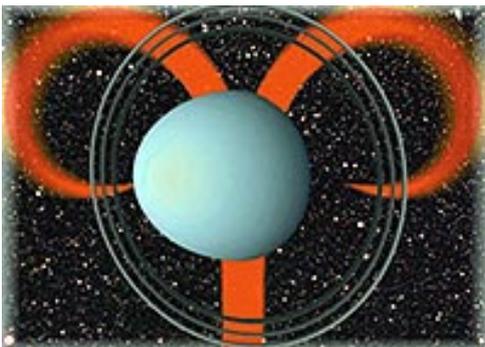


portion of our destiny which is being reaped in the present life: it may be mitigated to an extent, but can ultimately only be exhausted by being experienced. There is plenty of scope for strange experience here, and as usual the existential part of a transit, one which asks soul-level questions is the most demanding of all.

### **Saturn Survival Guide**

- Know when (& where) Saturn is affecting you
  - Look for repeating life themes
  - Prepare for the long term
  - Face your fears
  - Strike a balance
- Learn a good Saturn mantra
  - Do regular yoga and oil massage
  - Get some sunshine
  - Don't judge yourself too harshly
  - Chin up!

**Jupiter remains in Virgo until October 10th**, where it receives an aspect from Saturn in Sagittarius. It gets to 29° Virgo before going retrograde on February 6th and continues Rx until June 9th. This is not a grand or expansive Jupiter, especially under Saturn's influence, but still the Virgo house in your chart should receive a subtle boost, so look for leads, introductions, small acorns. **Jupiter retro** will be opposite Venus retrograde in Pisces, and the respective Gurus of the Vedic Gods and Demons will trade off. It seems perverse that the two planetary benefics should be enemies, but each rules quite separate tendencies, Venus material comforts and Jupiter the spiritual life. Entering Libra by October 10th is likewise enemy territory for Jupiter, with often a conflict of interest between play and preaching.



**Uranus heads into Aries on April 8th**, just as Saturn retrogrades, having first dipped into the sign in June of 2016. Enough to influence the UK's Brexit vote, before retreating back into Pisces. Symbolic of the chief Brexiteers, in fact, who after creating sudden anarchy, resigned immediately and

let others handle the fallout. So the debate between a hard or soft Brexit will continue, and the separatists will probably get their way initially until they realise it doesn't magically take us back to the days of Empire. Yet Uranus will also be in a harmonious trine with Saturn in mid-May and mid-November, bringing together the radical and the conservative, and for a time we can have freedom and responsibility. Both Saturn and Uranus will be in different gandanta zones, Jyestha -Mula, and Revati-Ashwini, water to fire, creating sudden change and general instability.

This is a potentially creative period where we can keep our feet on the ground and think outside the box. Too often Saturn backs us into a mould or formula where we simply phone it in: no stimulus or spontaneity: while we are seasoned and professional, our performance is perfunctory and clinical. Tradition becomes tyranny, and we follow the letter and not the spirit of the law. Alternately, Uranus has plenty of good ideas that don't always stack up in the real world, but in trine with Saturn, we have a more practical hat on. Sometimes **taking a risk is the less risky option**, something to bear in mind when the Saturn Route One is closed.

**Venus goes retrograde between March 3rd and April 15th.** This six week period - or more poetically, 40 days and 40 nights - is twice as long and therefore a bigger deal than Mercury retro, and creates its own special atmosphere and effect. Venus spends proportionately less time retrograde than any other planet, turning round only about every 19 months. Her primary motion – axial spin – is also slower than her secondary motion – orbital speed – or in other words, Venus's day is longer than her year, which plays up the leisurely pace she likes to do and savour things. She also spins in the opposite direction to all the other planets, suggesting compromise, playing the go-between and putting a spin on events - perfect for the PR planet.

Venus retrogrades in **eight-year cycles**, back-cycling within a degree or two of the same point each time, so her retrograde period begins a whole new scenario. Cast your mind back to unfinished business from 2009, when the world was still reeling from the Great Crash and your love life was in a different place. Venus's synodic relationship with the Earth is a special astrologer's favourite, the five symbolic 'kisses' forming a cosmic flower pattern - or pentagram, if you prefer - and it is lovely sweet, harmonious energy to work with.

Expect to see a different side of a friend or lover at this point, and to get a new perspective on your relationships. **Venus is in exaltation** through

the whole retro cycle, and in all remains in Pisces for four months – instead of the usual two weeks – and her conciliatory power may prove pivotal during Saturn’s sticky station in Sagittarius April-May, and Uranus’s explosion into Aries. We can build bridges, find a creative spark, romantic belief, empathy and forgiveness, while hopefully not falling prey to the Pisces rescue drama.



## THE GREAT AMERICAN ECLIPSE

The total solar eclipse of **August 21st 2017 at 4° Leo**, in the royal nakshatra of Magha, will be the first to be visible in the continental USA for nearly 40 years. The last occurred on February 26th 1979 (the July 11th 1991 eclipse passed

over Hawaii and Mexico). The 2017 eclipse path cuts across the country in a 70 mile wide band, all the way from Portland, Oregon to Charleston, South Carolina (someone should commission Chuck Berry to write a song about it).

The eclipse falls close to, though not quite close enough in mundane terms, the USA’s natal Moon at 7° Aquarius, though more pertinently ***it is within a degree of Donald Trump’s Mars, on his ascendant.*** Given the President Elect’s propensity to broadcast his every passing whim on social media, this is a hair-trigger moment for a diplomatic incident. Eclipses dramatize everything and there is huge scope for overreaction. We trust that Trump’s health is good – he is 70 years old and also in the throes of Sade Sati to his Moon in Scorpio – but this eclipse could put a strain on his 4thhouse lord Mars, in the sign of the heart.

“If any year could be said to be the ‘year zero’ of our modern era, 1979 is it,” **Julian Assange** wrote in a statement on the WikiLeaks website. “In 1979 it seemed as if the blood would never stop. Dozens of countries saw assassinations, coups, revolts, bombings, political kidnappings and wars of liberation.” Yet who could have seen at the time how influential this period would be, shaping the USA’s foreign policy for the remainder of the century and beyond.

The United States, with a stellium in its seventh house, including Mars, aspected by Saturn in the 10th, seems always to need an enemy to define itself against. War is excellent business, of course, but there is a streak of paranoia and evangelicalism in the US's soul that will never be satisfied unless it is seen as the White Hat battling evil. It is hoped that the current ceasefire in Syria is a good omen for 2017 and fanciful as it seems, perhaps the August eclipse will draw a line under the USA's Middle Eastern obsessions ever since the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979. It could be a game-changer.

- With **Rahu & Ketu** remaining in Leo-Aquarius in 2017, eclipses fall close to these points. February 26th sees an annular **Solar Eclipse at 13° Aquarius/Shatabisha**, a nakshatra with connotations of alternative healing.
- Lunar eclipses this year fall on **February 10th at 28° Cancer/Ashlesha**, and **August 7th at 20° Capricorn/Shravana**. As ever, look for your natal planets that fall within a degree of the eclipse, and expect a sudden change of heart or circumstance. Eclipses are emotionally intense periods, not good for rational choices but excellent for meditation and spiritual work.