

Cycles of Saturn
by Dane Rudhyar

Saturn is one of the most significant indicators of the cyclic activity of the life-process; that is, of turning points in the gradual unfoldment of destiny and character. This is so because it is essentially the symbol of the **formative energies** of life. One might say that, philosophically speaking, it represents the action of time upon space. It forces cosmic, organic and psychic aggregations to follow a definite cyclic pattern in their development.

Let us imagine that a number of people had converged on a particular location, impelled or compelled to do so by some kind of inner or outer need or desire. We might say, as an illustration, that they have been shipwrecked on an island. Soon a community of interests develop, a sense of group-cohesion, group-unity. This means that Saturn is at work, symbolically speaking. A cycle has begun for that group of castaways segregated in a particular geographical location.

Saturn is, in Greek mythology, the ruler of the Golden Age, which is the beginning of any cycle; the "honeymoon" of life. But, in a broader sense, Saturn is not only the beginning; it is the middle and the end of all cycles — the three "great moments" of all life-cycles. In the Bible, the Christ says: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last". But in the **Bhagavat Gita**, the Hindu Christ, Krishna, says "I am the Beginning, the Middle and the End of all existing things"; thus, the threefold Power which is the structural essence of each and all cycles — the triune reality of Time; past, present, and future.

Every life begins as a synthesis of the past. Everybody that is born is the end-product of ancestral series which stretches forever in the past, theoretically including the whole universe, all the dead Suns, all the past galaxies which left to that newborn child memories, however unconscious and subtle they be. And if one believes in reincarnation, every soul that is once more manifesting in and through a new-born body is the end-product of an infinite series of manifestations of that "spark of divinity." This synthesis of the past is called **Karma** in Asian philosophy.

Thus, every entity or organism, as it appears as such on the stage of life, is defined by this Karma — by the particular point in space and the particular moment in universal time at which it is born. The beginning of a cycle is a particular expression of Karma — and of the astrological Saturn. The exact position of Saturn in an individual chart indicates the manner in which the entire past of the Universe is focused upon that individual, conditioning his cycle of life-development.

Saturn conditions, but does not control. It says: Here is your starting point. The universe, before you came, has gone so far; now, move on from here **in your own way**, the best you can. What you will accomplish from that point to the moment of your death will be your contribution to the universe.

Indicative of Background

Let me emphasize, the statement that Saturn does not **rule** your future, but only shows the background, the past, the tradition, the culture, the womb whence you emerged — or should have emerged! The beginning of the cycle does not determine the end — at least,

does not determine it completely and unavoidably — because there is a middle point which symbolizes the **creative potency of the individual**, the ceaseless present, the unexpected and unpredictable factor, the "plus" element which enters in all life-processes, welling up from the core of the individual in which the wholeness of the Universe is mirrored, nay, more — focused.

This core of the individual, the "Living God" potential within all complete and independent wholes, however, **may or may not be operative** in a particular man or woman. It can only operate where a man or woman has become a relatively complete, independent and integrated personality. If this does not occur — and it does not occur in most cases, the way human beings are constituted today — then the victory of the astrological Uranus over Saturn (in Greek mythology, of Jupiter over Saturn) does not take place, and the man or woman remains merely a more or less undifferentiated specimen of his or her people, nation and community.

Only creative personalities focusing in themselves the liberating power of Uranus (or using the compensatory, expansive energy of Jupiter) can challenge Saturn's domination through the middle-point of their life-cycle — and this middle-point is not to be conceived of as one particular age, but typically as a period extending roughly from 30 to 50, and more precisely from 35 to 45. More broadly speaking, it is the present moment which can always be more than a sequence to the past, if the individual is creative. However, the "mass man," the majority-man, when facing the middle-point of his life (and every present moment), finds Saturn empowered in his consciousness. The once ruler of the Golden Age is now seen as the task-master, binding originality through routine, stifling yearning for true individuality, leveling all aspirations to the collective norm, sanctifying traditions and social patterns in meaningless repetitions of past performances, or of actions based on precedents and devoid of creative — thus free — initiative.

The preceding general statements can be interpreted astrologically through a study of Saturn's cycle — and as a result of such an interpretation, we shall be able to grasp the still more mysterious significance of Saturn, as the manifestation of the end of all cycles: as the seed; thus, as the potential Future.

Saturn's sidereal period is roughly 29 1/2 years (10759.22 days); and here again, as with Jupiter, we must realize that from our geocentric point of view, this period varies, as Saturn goes retrograde part of the time. If we want to have a regular period, we must consider the heliocentric position of the planet. However, in view of the point of view I have taken so far in this article, I shall consider Saturn's cycle above all in terms of an individual — from an "anthropocentric" (human-centered), thus also geocentric, point of view.

Important Saturn Years

Starting then from Saturn's position at birth, we shall find that transit Saturn (progressed Saturn moving too slowly for consideration here) reaches the opposition to its natal position

between the ages of 14 and 15; returns to the natal position around 29; reaches the opposition between 44 and 45; returns to the natal position again around 59-60; reaches the opposition around 73-74; and its natal position once more around 89-90. These ages give some idea of the meaning of the Saturn-cycle in terms of individual unfoldment.

Generally speaking, the birth-position of Saturn and natal aspects to Saturn refer to the **structural conditioning** — the framework or skeleton — of the individual being; with the Moon being also considered in the matter, as Saturn and the Moon should always be studied together. (Saturn is the father-image; the Moon, the mother image — psychologically speaking.)

Therefore, as Saturn moves away from itself by transit, the child becomes able to move away from, to **gain perspective upon** his birth-conditioning, his parents, his dependence upon strict family patterns. This takes on the character of a crisis at puberty, or rather immediately **after** puberty — around 15. Mind develops then, as an objective factor, a factor of critical evaluation. This is the real turning point of adolescence; not merely a biological awareness of sex and social relationship, but even more deeply a confrontation with and evaluation of the family as something objective, from which one should become, if not separated, at least inwardly independent.

Truly, this attitude is not taken by all adolescents. But when it is **not** taken, the psychologist may speak of mother-complex, father-complex, religion-complex, and the like. If, however, the step is taken more or less satisfactorily (an inward step, which needs not show outwardly at all), then the "waning" hemicycle of Saturn will bring a progressive development of the individual ego, up to the twenty-ninth or thirtieth year.

A New Cycle

Then as Saturn returns to its natal position, a new cycle of Karma begins, which had its source around the age of 28, and even 25 (a year of choice which determines usually the **direction** of the life). This new cycle is, theoretically, the cycle of individual selfhood in contradistinction to the previous cycle of generic selfhood. I discussed these cycles in my books (particularly in **New Mansions for Men**) as 28-year cycles. As such, however, they belong to the Uranus cycle of 84-year duration.

There is a close inter-relationship between the Saturn and the Uranus cycles. The Uranus cycle refers to events in the unconscious, or rather to events projected out of the unconscious into the consciousness. At 28, the Uranian impulse should be effective; **but it takes some time for it to register in the consciousness**. As it does, the second Saturn cycle begins.

The pattern can be explained in general terms as follows: At the beginning of a Saturn cycle (conjunction) the person is forced into a new situation (into new "Karmic" limitations) which theoretically defines and conditions his destiny (his pattern of consciousness and character) for the duration of this Saturn cycle. However, as the point of opposition is reached (transiting Saturn opposing natal Saturn) a person should be able to reach a really

objective understanding of the situation and, through this understanding, to become inwardly free from it.

As this is done, the situation becomes either actually transformed or loses its binding power. And while Saturn moves from opposition again to conjunction, a basic repolarization of the conscious ego takes place, which leads to another "Karmic" situation — but at a higher level. If, however, the person does not reach objective and self-transforming understanding at and after the time of opposition, there is no real progress, no change in the level of consciousness; but instead, a kind of aimless merry-go-round leading to futile repetition of experiences.

This is a basic Saturn cycle pattern. It works not only when the cycles of transiting Saturn are considered in relation to the natal Saturn, but also, in lesser ways, each year when the Sun makes its conjunction and opposition to Saturn — and each month when the Moon does likewise. All Saturn conjunctions **bind** to a particular viewpoint, a particular situation, a particular task. All Saturn oppositions are potential gates to consciousness and to a truly individual development, through objective understanding.

Pattern Indicated

A birth chart reveals some of its most basic secrets when Saturn conjunctions and oppositions are in evidence. They become meaningful when 1) the nature of the other planet or planets involved is considered; also the signs of the zodiac and the houses in which they occur; 2) where Saturn is found, some kind of "knot of destiny" is unavoidable, but if a planet opposes Saturn, through that planet liberation may come; 3) when Saturn transits a natively opposing planet, some basic issue is bound to come to a head in relation to that planet; or, 4) depth-rousing awareness caused by a confrontation which may shock one into fuller self-realization — or leave one heavily bound by a sense of frustration and hopelessness.

Ordinary textbooks of astrology usually combine together in a single statement the meanings of Saturn conjunctions and oppositions. This is a very unfortunate procedure. It may be satisfactory where a merely superficial forecast of facts is demanded; but it fails to take into account consciousness, that is, one's reactions to so-called facts. And such reactions are all-important; for they alone can bind us to the facts in emotional confusion, or free us from facts by fulfilling them with fearlessness and understanding.

When Saturn is conjunct a planet in a natal chart, a new situation for the incarnating Self, or for the family tradition, is shown which will occupy deeply the consciousness of the native. It is a binding situation, because it is something new — thus unfamiliar — and it will take the entire attention of the person during a great deal of the life. It will bring basic experiences in the field characterized by the planet conjunct with Saturn — and the understanding of these experiences will take much time and perhaps many repetitions; yet, the task of the native is to cease progressively to become identified with these experiences so that they may lose their **compulsive character**, psychologically speaking. Later, during

the years when the natal conjunction moves into its opposition, the native may experience opportunities to achieve an objective understanding of the condition — and freedom from it; but freedom that can only come through fulfillment.

In these cases, there is usually the danger of psychological complexes forming — especially if Saturn is conjunct with the Sun (father-complex through deprivation, misunderstanding or too close psychic linkage) and with the Moon (mother-complex). Saturn conjunct with the Part of Fortune is a strong indication of basic introversion and of a tendency to pessimism or self-pity. There is a curious sense of fatality, or of being compelled to act following some dominant purpose imposed from without. It tends to isolate the native and to make him feel heavy with the burden of the world, but of course this may be modified by other astrological factors.

When transit Saturn opposes a natal Moon, the possibility of liberation from a heavy ancestral-parental past is indicated. It is a particularly strong aspect, because the Moon is the feminine polarity of Saturn. All incarnations can be said to be, abstractly, the results of a Saturn-Moon conjunction. So, when a man or woman is born with a Saturn-Moon conjunction, he, and especially she, is forced into incarnation with a vengeance; but if there is a Saturn-Moon opposition, the gates of the "second birth" can be more easily opened and the life-task is shown to be that of liberation from the collective past and its patterns.

I mentioned the transit oppositions of Saturn to its natal position coming after puberty. It has its parallel in the one occurring around 44 or 45 — the time of the change of life. The physiological readjustment — "adolescence in reverse" — (which takes place in men as well as women) may begin two or more years later (or earlier); but what is even more important is the psychological change which normally centers around 45.

Just as the youth of 15 is challenging or trying to become fully objective to his family background and ancestral limitations — so the mature person of 45 is trying to evaluate whatever he has been trying to build as an individual since adolescence. Such an evaluation easily leads to a sense of frustration, failure and impotency. It is then, therefore, that the individual often begins to back down; the pioneer becomes conservative and he who rebelled against the collective norm easily becomes caught into the most ordinary, typical patterns of behavior. In fact, he has to — if he is to learn to evaluate properly his own original contribution, and to build during the coming years a synthesis of collective and of individualistic values. It can be a real synthesis, but, in most cases, it is only a compromise which "saves faces," yet adds not greatly to human understanding.

From 45 to 60, this synthesis should continue. These should be the most creative years for the truly creative individual who is not merely a child-prodigy, a wonderful yet instable product of sheer heredity — a "medium" to his ancestors or his own soul-past. At 56 comes the time of the theoretical third birth — along the Uranus cycle. It is followed by the beginning of the third Saturn cycle around age 59-60.