

VENUS RETROGRADE

The Rise of the Dark Feminine

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On the 7th March, relationship planet Venus turns retrograde and will travel backwards for six weeks, turning direct again on 18th April. This phenomenon only occurs every 18 months but its effects can be extremely challenging if not downright disruptive!

Venus is a dual goddess with a light and a dark face. She embodies the paradox of the sacred and the profane; the divine and the temporal; life and death and love and war. As ruler of Libra and the Morning Star, Venus represents the refined, ideal, heavenly and socially acceptable idea of love and what we consider to be aesthetically pleasing or culturally desirable. As ruler of Taurus and the Evening Star, Venus represents the sexual, sensual, physical and selfish or instinctual side of love and desire.

Venus Retrograde Mythology

The Aztecs knew a great deal about Venus retrograde and attached great significance to her cycle. When Venus was the Evening Star and stationery retrograde (2nd-12th March in this year's cycle), she came to earth in the form of a man. The man met Xochiquetzal, the beautiful goddess of passionate sexual love and prostitution who seduced him, making him break his vows of purity. From their union, a sky monster was born. In his shame at allowing his base instincts to take control, Venus descended to the underworld and was challenged to play a ritual ball game, peylota, also known as "the game of life." He lost the game and was sacrificed by the Sun. As Venus died he became invisible, resting in the arms of the Sun for eight days but was eventually reborn as the Morning Star, in female form. The Aztecs set armies marching as Venus rose from the underworld, accompanied by human blood sacrifice and fertility rites. This was Venus, goddess of war, covered with the blood and bones of the dead after her 40-day retrograde journey.

What does Venus Retrograde mean for me?

Symbolically, the Venus retrograde period makes us re-evaluate our deepest values. As Venus moves towards conjunction with the Sun (7th - 28th March in this cycle), we are challenged to let go of old ideas of purity and 'right behaviour'. Seduced by our desires, we often feel ashamed and try to hide our actions and thoughts, creating 'sky monsters' in our minds. Going within (to the underworld or unconscious) a battle takes place between our values (Venus) and our essential self (the Sun). We play the game of life. When our essential self defeats our outmoded values, we are forced to surrender and release them. We can then be reborn with new values and a more honest heart.

Venus retrograde is no picnic, particularly for those in unhappy relationships or living lives devoid of pleasure. Imagine a bright torch shining into the darkest corners of your heart – you can no longer hide your true desires or keep up appearances. When analysing a Venus retrograde transit, look back eight years to see when Venus was retrograde in the same area of your chart (mid Aries –late Pisces). This area will be vulnerable again.

Here are some possible manifestations.

- War on the senses, on attitudes to love and on old, dead values.
- Hatred, infidelity and jealousy - the dark side of passionate and romantic love.
- A cold hard look at relationships of all kinds, often leading to break ups but also to reconciliation.
- An examination of what is needed to maintain personal integrity.
- A time of failure, resignation or accident.
- Conscious or unconscious retreat.
- Instinctive understanding of events and interactions.
- Dealing with opposites (cf Hanged Man in tarot).
- Hidden needs emerge, creating emotional turmoil.
- Contemplation of one's own creative needs and needs for love and nourishment.

Key Dates in the Venus Retrograde Cycle

For two months before she turns retrograde (7th January to 7th March) Venus can be seen in the evening sky setting after the Sun as the Evening Star. You may have noticed a bright star in the west after sunset.

On 7th March, Venus stations retrograde at 15° Aries and appears to move backwards through the zodiac towards the Sun. When a planet turns retrograde near a point or planet in your chart, it forces you to deal with issues relating to that point or planet. Those with personal planets between 12-18° Aries will be most affected. So, for example, if you have the Moon at 13° Aries, unresolved emotional issues may come to the surface. If you have Mars at 16° Aries, hidden anger or jealousy could emerge. And if you have the South Node at 15° Aries, lovers from the past could come back to haunt you.

Venus then meets up with the Sun halfway through the retrograde cycle on 28th March at 7° Aries at what is called the inferior conjunction (when the ball game is played in the underworld). This is probably the most crucial point of the cycle and marks the beginning of a new phase of insight or action. Check to see if you have planets between 5-9° Aries.

About a week later Venus begins her phase as Morning Star, rising ahead of the Sun. She turns direct on 18th April at 29° Pisces. This is the third and final key stage of the cycle, known as the stationery direct period (8th-25th April). Those with planets between 27° Pisces – 1° Aries will be most affected during this time, and as Venus is

travelling alongside Mars (men, sex, anger) and Uranus (sudden, unexpected happenings), we can expect even more upheaval than normal!

The best way to prepare for the Venus retrograde cycle is to be honest about any shortcomings in your relationships with both men and women, or any area of life where you are living a lie. Take action to sort out the problem rather than waiting for it to surface and take you by surprise. As Venus rules aesthetics, beauty, fashion and interior design, March and April are perfect months for a physical makeover or home decorating spree. And as Venus is also the planet of money, you may find your finances take a downward turn as the dark goddess heads into the underworld!