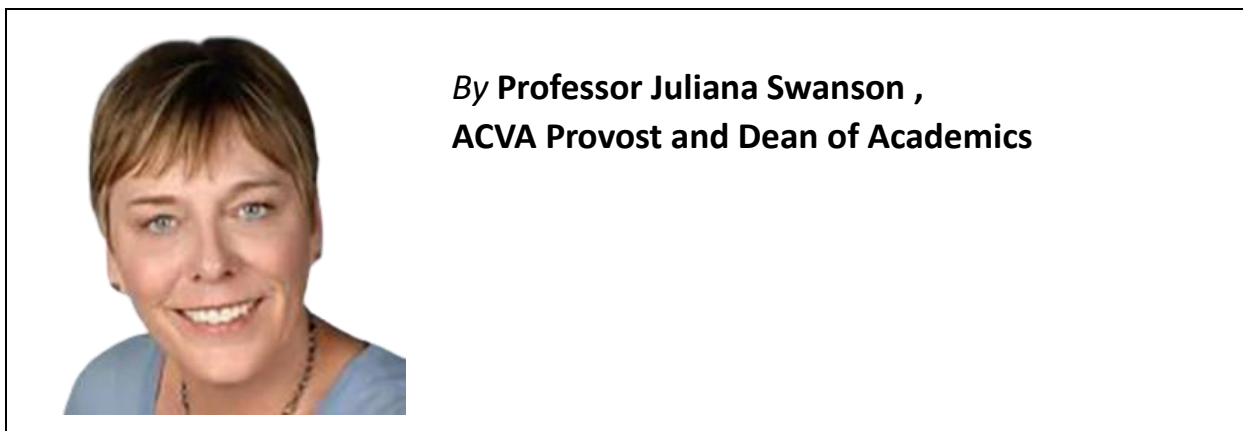


Makar Sankranti



The Hindu festival of *Makar Sankranti* was celebrated around the world on 14 January 2025. In many locales, the festival extends for several days. Also known as *Maghi*, *Pongal*, *Lohri*, and *Boghi* (the day before), *Makar Sankranti* is a very important astronomical, astrological, cultural, and spiritual festival in Vedic culture. It takes place as the Sun enters the constellation of Capricorn. This is a sacred time of the year when the solar force begins to herald a new, positive direction in the northern hemisphere.

Makar Sankranti is observed as a harvest festival and new year holiday in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and throughout the Hindu diaspora. It is a fasting and feasting day, a time for family reunions, a day to pray and worship, visit the temple, or to dip in a sacred river for karmic purification. On this day, according to Swami Sivananda, "...old, worn-out and dirty things are discarded and burned. Homes are cleaned and white-washed. Even the roads are swept clean and lovely designs are drawn with rice-flour."



Makar Sankranti is the beginning of a new cycle of warmer and longer days, and is considered the first day of early spring in some areas. Many traditions believe it is important to be outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine on *Makar Sankranti*, to light bonfires, perform fire ceremonies (*pujas*), make ancestral offerings, fly kites, and attend outdoor fairs.

The Sun is *Surya*, the Light. Saturn, the ruler of Capricorn, is *Shani*, a shadow born of the Sun. Although they can have severe differences according to Vedic mythology and astrology, they come together in harmony on *Makar Sankranti*, and that itself is something to celebrate! The Sun's entry into Capricorn symbolizes the illumination of our shadow side as we merge into more light. This entails the act of forgiveness and letting go of the pettiness and old stories of the past, meanwhile reaching higher to aspire to a more spiritual awareness of oneself and life.

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