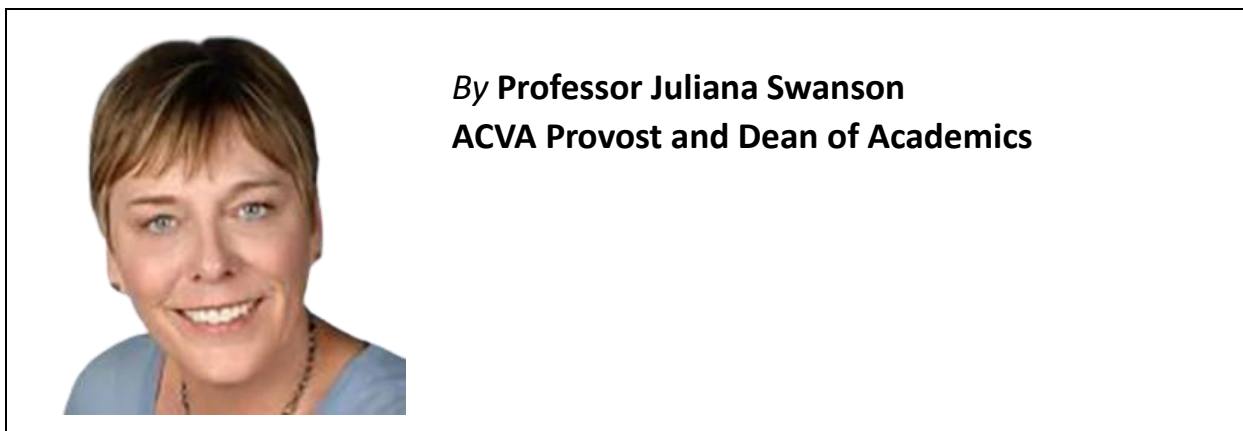


Navaratri



March 29/30 to April 6/7: Chaitra or Vasant Navaratri - The Nine Nights of Mother Divine

In North and South America, *Chaitra* or *Vasant Navaratri* will be celebrated from March 29 to April 6. In the rest of the world, it will be celebrated from March 30 to April 7. This joyous Vedic festival is celebrated for nine nights in commemoration of the allegorical battle of good versus evil which is symbolized by *Mata Durga's* defeat of the demon *Mahishasura*. This festival culminates at *Vijaya Dasami*, the tenth Day of Victory after the conclusion of the nine-night celebration. This epic battle is memorialized in the Vedic text called *Devi Mahatmya*. During the nine days and nights, excerpts from this thirteen-chapter book are often read aloud, acted out, or discussed in homes, temples, and ashrams.



Navaratri has profound esoteric meaning and significance for devotees who fast, pray, meditate, chant, bathe in holy rivers, offer *seva* and charity, and participate in other kinds of specific ancient rituals during this time. During the nine nights, *Devi Durga* is worshiped in various forms. She is said to walk among us to bring blessings and healing during this time, to transmute some of the evil of the world, and to assist her devotees in overcoming their own personal demons. There are many ways to celebrate *Navaratri*. One simple way is to propitiate three aspects of the goddess for three days and nights each (with fasting, prayer, meditation, mantra, offerings, and *pujas*):

- * The first three are devoted to *Durga Devi*, the personification of power and purification.
- * The second three are devoted to *Lakshmi Devi*, the essence of compassion and beauty.
- * The last three are devoted to *Saraswati Devi*, the embodiment of wisdom and grace.

May *Mata Durga* bless our dear readers with wisdom, strength, and courage to face the challenges in life. And may this *Navaratri* be a time of spiritual awakening and personal growth for all beings everywhere.

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