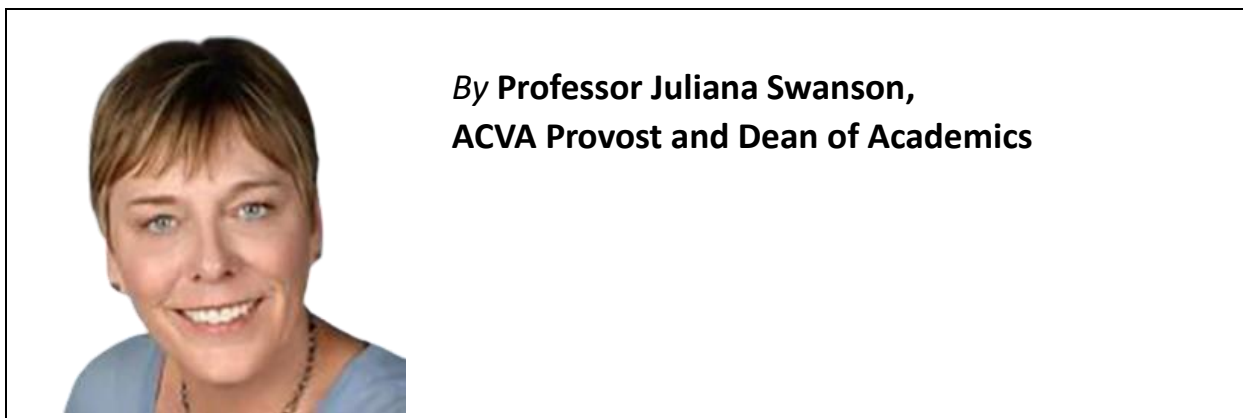


Maha Shivaratri



The Great Night of Shiva, known as *Maha Shivaratri*, will be celebrated on February 25th in North America, and on February 26th elsewhere in the world. *Shivaratri* is celebrated each month by yogis during the deeply waning Moon phase in the *chaturdashi tithi*, the 14th day after the Full Moon (and a few days before the New Moon). Every month, *Shivaratri* is a time for deep contemplation and inner quiet, a time to journey within and bask in the true inner light that exists beyond the world of form.

Maha Shivaratri is the most special among all the *Shivaratris* that happen in a year. *Maha Shivaratri* takes place in the month of *Phalguna* in the days leading up to the New Moon in Aquarius. Lord Shiva presides over this astrological sign, which is symbolized by the Water Bearer who pours forth the “water of life.” Known as *kundalini shakti*, this “water” is the essence of spiritual power, wisdom, purity, peace, and rebirth.

The immortal rishis of India understood that the days around the New Moon in Aquarius are a special time for connecting with the inner light of Shiva. Physiological and bio-energetic processes can become activated at this time through spiritual practices like fasting, *pujas* (fire ceremonies), chanting, holy baths, and meditation. This is related to the Sun and the Moon alignment that takes place not only “up there” in the heavens but also “down here” in our sublime energetic system of the higher chakras during this lunar cycle.



Maha Shivaratri commemorates Lord Shiva as Nilakantha, the Blue-Throated One. His story is related to the legendary *Samudra Manthan* which occurred when the devas and asuras got together to churn the great cosmic ocean to obtain more of the elixir of life, known as *amrita*. Lord Shiva was tasked with swallowing the pot full of *halāhala* (also called *kālakūṭa*, a metaphoric "poison") which came out of the celestial waters during the churning process. The *halāhala* was so noxious that Shiva's throat turned blue. Thus, *Maha Shivaratri* every year represents a powerful time for purification within all of us and in the world.

Jai Sri Neelakantha! Shiva Shiva Shambo! Mahadeva Shambo! Om Namah Shivay! May Lord Shiva heal, purify, enlighten, and empower all beings with his divine blessings! *Jai Bhole Ki!*

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