

A cultural carnival



India's cultural canvas isn't just painted with grand Durga Puja pandals of West Bengal or the Garba beats of Gujarat. Across states and communities, Navratri unfolds in surprising, colourful, and lesser-known ways. *Kriti Verma, GT Network, takes you on a journey into these vibrant corners where traditions bloom in uniquely magical styles!*

Kullu Dussehra

Where: Himachal Pradesh

Uniqueness: Starts on Dussehra, the last day of Navratri, with Lord Raghunath's idol carried in a royal chariot procession, followed by a week of fairs and celebrations.

Significance: The festival celebrates regional devotion and brings together over 200 deities from across Kullu Valley, showcasing local harmony and pride.

Did you know? Invitation letters are sent via local officials (*tehsildars*) to the deities' temples with a committee handling accommodation, security, and ceremonial offerings.



Bommai Golu

Where: Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana

Uniqueness: Families arrange intricate, multi-tiered displays of dolls (*golu*), each narrating mythological tales and rural scenes throughout Navratri.

Significance: Preserves visual and oral storytelling traditions.

Did you know? Odd-numbered tiers are considered auspicious. Placed highest are a pair of wooden *marapachi* dolls - couple symbolising prosperity and fertility.

Where: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and UP

Uniqueness: Families sow barley seeds (called *khetri* or *jau*) in earthen pots at the start of Navratri. The sprouts symbolise growth, prosperity, and fertility.

Significance: The healthy sprouting of barley is seen as a blessing from Goddess Durga. The ritual also honours agricultural cycle and nature's bounty.

Did you know? After Navratri, barley shoots are immersed in rivers or placed under sacred Peepal trees to spread the goddess' blessings in the nature.

Khetri



Vidyarambham

Where: Kerala

Uniqueness: On Vijayadashami, the last day of Navratri, children are initiated into learning by tracing letters on rice or sand, seeking Goddess Saraswati's blessings.

Significance: Marks the sacred start of formal education for thousands across Kerala.

Did you know? Writing on sand means practice, while writing on rice means gaining knowledge that brings prosperity.



Ayudha Puja

Where: Karnataka

Uniqueness: On Navratri's ninth day, all tools, vehicles, and weaponry are worshipped, including royal swords.

Significance: Honours the link between daily labour and divine force, uplifting objects to a spiritual level.

Did you know? Mysuru sees a spectacular public parade of regal swords and weapons.

