

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The celebrations in this story are based on recollections of my childhood. Navarathri was one of my favorite festivals. It got us more than a week off from school!

Before every Navarathri, my brother would crawl up the loft space to pull out the crate of dolls. As a women-only festival, the role of men was limited to helping with the arrangements.

As I could only “meet” the golu dolls once a year, I’d eagerly wait for the crate to be unpacked, as if it were a box of birthday presents. My mom would buy a new doll every year to add to our collection. We would arrange the clay, wood, and porcelain dolls, as well as wax fruits and vegetables, on “grass” grown from mustard seeds to create miniature zoos and parks.

Golu dolls are passed down from one generation to the next. I have my great-grandmother’s porcelain British orchestra from the colonial era!

I’d especially look forward to golu hopping, which is when we’d meet relatives I hadn’t seen all year and visit friends and neighbors. This part of the Navarathri festivities renewed friendships and helped make new ones. The rituals were fun and made me feel special. Different, yummy sundal (legume snacks) every evening and gifts from every house we visited were fun bonuses!

Like Navya, Navarathri helped me find my Shakti to face my fears. I hope you find your Shakti too!