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ANOTHER 'INTERESTING'  
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SRIKANTH ENTERS  
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# Idols of faith

As the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities begin, TEAM VIVA goes around the city to look for eco-friendly options.

Imagine worshipping the earthly Ganesha in the open, in a potted pit with the heavens above as witness. And then when the prayers are done and rituals over, the clay form dissolves into the earth and the embedded seeds and grains sprout as flowering plants. It is known that divinity stays with you forever but when you align your earthly rituals with that thought, you get a conscientious society.

Mukesh Goyal of Kriti Creations in Khan Market has been doing eco-friendly Ganeshas for the past three-four years. Their sizes vary from four inches to 30 inches and they do not use any kind of resin. The paints used are eco-friendly too.

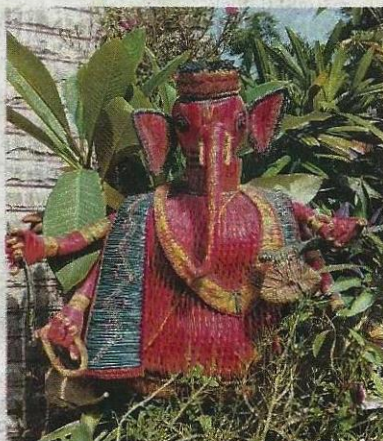
The idol makers are based out of Calcutta and Maharashtra and since these idols are not baked, they break easily during transport. "About 50 per cent of the idols break and this pushes up the cost drastically. However, if we have to save the environment and secure water for the future generations, this is essential."

Kriti Creations also has pots with a seed inside that can be buried in the house or in the colony park. "When the plant grows big many years down the line, the children of the family will look at it with pride," adds Goyal.

Since last year, the sales of eco-friendly Ganesha have gone up by 20 per cent at this shop. "But the government needs to put a ban on plastic and cement ones for these are harming the environment."

## SIKKI GANESHA

The beautiful Ganesha made out of Sikki craft from Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur and Madhubani district can be picked up from Dastkar Haat as well as the Crafts Museum. Standing at 1.5-2 feet, these are priced between ₹2,000-3,000.



Artist Puneet Kaushik, who has worked with the artisans, says, "This is made of a grass called Sikki from which the craft derives its name. These are dyed in natural colours and with the help of a needle like tool, it is woven to make the figures of deities, baskets and more." One such Ganesha takes up a prominent place in his garden.

## HAND-BLOWN GLASS IDOLS

Lighting designers Prateek Jain and Gautam Seth have unveiled a new range of collectibles for the festive season with



hand-blown glass. The Ganesha and his accessories, including coconut offerings, are for keeps and can be re-used.

## TERRACOTTA ARMY

Online portals like Snapdeal are following an eco-friendly approach by offering a choice of terracotta idols, which are made entirely of clay and have no paint-based embellishments. The idols dissolve in water without leaving any harmful residue.

## TREE GANESHA

Some children are celebrating Ganesh Chaturthi by venerating a tree dressed as the Lord and not casting him in any earthly mould. Many Indians have treated trees as sacred. How powerful this is today, in the era of climate change.

The commonly-used idols are usually made of Plaster of Paris (PoP) and are decorated with paints having high lead and mercury content, which are harmful for the environment. PoP chokes water bodies, while the toxic colors make the water acidic, disturbing the plants and marine life ecosystem. So stay away from them even if it means scaling down your celebrations.

