

'At the end of its lifetime a sari from Kanchipuram can yield a lasting memento. The jari can be smelted into a keepsake. That, though, does not happen in a hurry.'

Kanchi as it is affectionately known. One reason is the jari is of a different quality, containing no silver. At the end of its lifetime, a sari from Kanchipuram can yield a lasting memento. The jari can be smelted into a keepsake. That, though, does not happen in a hurry. Because the silk is high quality, with proper care and maintenance Kanchipuram sarees are wearable for 25 to 30 years, sometimes longer.

Traditionally, Kanchipuram's weavers rely on silk produced near Bangalore – a city that has simultaneously evolved into an Information Technology hub. Silk of the absolutely highest quality comes from Siddalagatta, a village roughly 30 kilometres from Karnataka's capital. The silkworms have a pure mulberry diet. This helps ensure their silk is strong, and garments woven from it have a superior lustre and finish.

The silk passes through numerous hands before it is draped around a bride. After its production in Bangalore's hinterland, the silk is taken to a reeler. It is then delivered to a twister, and onwards to the thread-maker and dyer. Only then do the weavers get the silk, after which it still has to be traded.

Kanchipuram is filled with notable temples to visit, such as Amman and Vaikuntha Perumal, but no visit is truly complete without a visit to the showrooms of the city's weavers. ●●● **Stuart Forster**

