



# India Ink

Notes on the World's Largest Democracy

## From Chennai, the Sari With a Phone Pocket

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In Chennai, even as the young have switched to jeans and skirts in the name of modernity and comfort, the sari still remains the preferred attire for many. The silk sari is reserved for those special occasions (like weddings) when it is worth even bearing the terrible Chennai heat to flaunt that latest design.

And for that practical touch, enter the sari with a pocket – pre-stitched and embroidered, appearing just below the waist on the left – that can carry a mobile phone or even the stray iPod or lipstick. Indeed, that's what the television ad for the pocket sari shows, ending with the smart slim woman walking away, dumping her frumpy old handbag

behind.

These pocket saris, which begin at 4,000 rupees, were a sensation when they were introduced by the popular Sri Kumaran Stores in the T. Nagar neighborhood of Chennai.



The sari with a matching phone pouch.

They are targeted for the “modern, working woman or the young girl who wants something trendy even with a traditional Kanjeevaram silk sari,” says Jeyasree Ravi, owner of Palam Silks, who later introduced what she calls this “concept sari.” Palam also offers an option for less adventurous women – silk saris with matching pouches for mobile phones, both great hits among Chennai women of all ages. “It is especially popular among college girls who buy it to wear at parties and functions,” she says.

However, Mrs. Ravi adds that the popularity of the pocket sari has been overtaken by newer ideas like the ready made, pre-pleated sari (also with a pocket – just slip into it) and the sari with four different pallus (called the zip match sari) that can be zipped up according to the mood of the moment.

Change is in the air in this city. And true to what locals would call the spirit of Chennai, it means a nod to the future while keeping a firm eye on the past.