

## tourist info



A great road trip is all it takes to reach one of India's most famous handloom centers

# WEAVING MAGIC

Every second house in the village of Uppada is a handloom store. Just like Mangalagiri, it goes with the territory. For this place too is a handloom village that has brought forth a commercially successful sari. Uppada is an old weaving tradition, one that goes back 300 years. The weavers in the village wove Jamdani which was patronized by the Raja of Pithapuram and later by the local *zamindars*.

A localized version of the 300-year-old Jamdani technique, this style of weaving was once the royal garment of the rulers of Andhra Pradesh; weavers from prohibited from weaving these saris for anyone outside the royal household. Today this sari sells from anywhere upwards of Rs 6000 to around Rs 3,00,000, not taking into account the custom orders of course.

Though it is now the favored form of wedding sari, the Uppada weave has had quite a roller coaster ride. From being a simple cotton sari in the 1950s, to fading out in the 80s to achieving the GI tag in the 2000s. It evolved to its current form when Bangladeshi weavers came and settled in Uppada and the traditional Jamdani technique took root here.

Don't be surprised if you hear of the Uppada *Pattu* sari being referred to as Uppada Jamdani, for its origins can be traced back to today's Bangladesh. Jamdani is the fine art of flawless weaving where it is impossible to tell the reverse from the front of the motif.

Known for its soft texture and lightness, what defines this sari is the thread count. A 100 threads go in lengthwise while a 120

go in sideways. Not a thread more, not one less, for, it is this thread count that ensures the quality and feel of this beautiful rich hand woven fabric.

One of the more affluent weaving centers in South India, it has been among the few handlooms extremely profitable to the weaver. With its popularity only increasingly each year, this loom's story has only just begun! ■

### ● GETTING THERE

16 kilometers from Kakinada and almost 500 kilometers from Hyderabad, a trip to Uppada is better done by road through Konaseema. However, there are many trains every week to Kakinada.

### ● DID YOU KNOW?

Late Jayalalithaa, erstwhile Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu had once come to Uppada to commission a sari woven with threads of pure molten gold and today there is still a picture of her in the sari at the weaver's house.

### ● HANDY TIP

Avoid the bigger stores with the glass fronts and the air-conditioning. It is the smaller houses that stock the better quality saris.

### ● DON'T MISS

Sunset at Uppada Beach.

TEXT AND PHOTOS: NEEHARIKA SATYAVADA