

The history of Thangka paintings

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From embroidered soft furnishings and carpets to art, singing bowls, tribal sculptures, wooden furniture, prayer flags, chimes and prayer wheels, **Sacred Citadel** offers a Tibetan treasure for every budget.

One such offering is the art of Thangka – paintings based on the Indian religious art of pata and mandala. The principal artistic schools from which this form of art began in the 7th and 8th centuries were located in Western India. But influence was felt throughout Central and Eastern India and eventually reached Nepal, from where it filtered into Tibet. Buddhism and its associated art forms made considerable advances throughout Tibet during the reign of Songtsen Gampo thanks largely to his marriages to both Nepalese and Chinese princesses, which in turn encouraged Nepalese and Chinese artists to enter the region.

As owner of *Sacred Citadel* Dr Premendra Verma explains, "A Thangka painting is not simply a decoration or a creation of beauty, but a religious object and a medium for expressing Buddhist ideals. These works of art function as models on which the practitioner can reflect and meditate." There are many reasons for commissioning a Thangka, but perhaps the most common one is to create an object of worship, leading to the accumulation of merit. In fact, just gazing upon a Thangka is in itself a good deed. But it's

only through meditation that you can gain an understanding of the awareness the specific image portrays.

Thangkas are also commissioned to bring about good health, prosperity or long life. They can be gifted to another for recovery of an illness, for protection during vulnerable periods, or to help in the rebirth of someone who has recently died.

A person may have several Thangkas painted in a lifetime. In all instances, a lama is consulted to advise on the most appropriate deity to feature – peaceful or wrathful deities, meditation deities, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Dharma Protectors or saints and their lives. Thangkas may also depict aspects of Buddhist doctrine such as the layout of the animate universe in the form of the Wheel of Existence, illustrations of monastic garb, implements and practices, as well as medical and astrological charts and diagrams.

Visit *Sacred Citadel* to find out more about Thangka paintings and discover the heritage of the Tibetan people. The only store in Malaysia selling Tibetan items with the blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Sacred Citadel* works with settlements in Nepal, Bhutan and India to promote the work of Tibetan artisans beyond the confines of their own country. 44-A 1st Floor, Jalan Telawi 5, Bangsar Baru, KL. Tel: 03 2284 8412. Email: sacdel@streamyx.com.



Hand painted using natural pigments and organic dyes, each Thangka artwork is truly a masterpiece.

