

Dr Premendra Y Verma of Sacred Citadel

Discover why this noted historian has such a love for Tibetan art.

TF: What led to your interest in Tibetan art?

PV: I was born in the Himalayan region of the northern part of India and my father has had a close association with the Dalai Lama since 1964. My father was also the founding director of the Indian government department of Languages, Art and Culture, so these factors were all very strong influences in my appreciation of Tibetan art.

I used to accompany my father on his trips to museums, where he passed on his love of history to me. So following my schooling at *Bishop Cotton* - Asia's oldest British school - I then went to Chandigarh to study history at college and university. After teaching at a local college I then travelled to America on a US President's fellowship and remained there as a visiting professor.

TF: How did you arrive in KL?

PV: My wife is from Penang and after meeting in America we decided to settle in KL. I realised there wasn't an accurate representation of Tibetan art here so I decided to use my experience as a historian and the knowledge imparted by my



father to bring Tibetan artworks to Malaysia. My wife is my business partner and it's because of her support my dream has become a reality. Because of my background, training and knowledge I can also educate my customers about each piece. My

four-year old son also possesses a keen passion for art, so I'll be teaching him everything I know.

TF: Why is Tibetan art so special?

PV: Tibetan art is certainly sacred, but its beauty is that it can be also perceived as secular - or non-religious. For a Buddhist, a thangka painting can be worshipped. But for a secular-minded person it is perceived as a piece of art. In this way,



Image: Jasmine Cheng



Tibetan art is for everyone - no matter their beliefs. Tibetan art is also very special because following its commercialisation it's very difficult to find trained masters who do not deviate from the scriptures. The art pieces we have at *Sacred Citadel* are created by trained masters with 40 to 50 years experience. These masters continued with their art and have also trained others, so someone will always continue the traditions.

TF: Can the artworks be custom made?

PV: I work with Tibetan settlements spread throughout the Himalayas, placing orders with real artisans who accept customised requests. What is done for one client is never repeated. The pieces are created by well known masters and their genuineness is guaranteed. As the Tibetan set-



Sacred Citadel
44-A, 1st Floor, Jalan Telawi 5
(opposite Maybank)
Bangsar Baru, KL
Tel: 03 2284 8412/012 906 5966
Email: sacdel@streamyx.com
Web: www.sacredcitadel.com
Open: Tues-Sun 10am-7pm

tlements are quite remote there is a five-month waiting list for customised items. But I do have a substantial collection of pieces I request on a regular basis. Items such as carved and painted furniture, hand-woven carpets, prayer wheels, thangkas, silk appliqué bedding, singing bowls and ornaments - among other pieces - are always in stock at *Sacred Citadel*.

TF: Why is Sacred Citadel unique?

PV: It's the only Tibetan gallery in KL to operate with the blessing of the Dalai Lama. Because of his regard for my father we were lucky to obtain his blessing in 2004. And we're also special because of our focus on quality - not quantity. Our next shipment is due by December and will contain some very exclusive items. Be sure to drop by and discover a treasure from Tibet! ■

Prem's Top Finds

PLACE Penang, not just because my wife is from the Pearl of the Orient, but this island getaway offers adventure, beaches, food, classy hotels and history - with a capital HI
FOOD I'm vegetarian and it's hard to pick just one restaurant, *Madras New Woodlands* (Tel: 03 2282 5826) and *Spice Garden* (Tel: 03 2095 2220) in Bangsar are favourites.
SHOPPING *Kinokuniya* (www.kinokuniya.com) in KLCC is the ultimate find for booklovers.