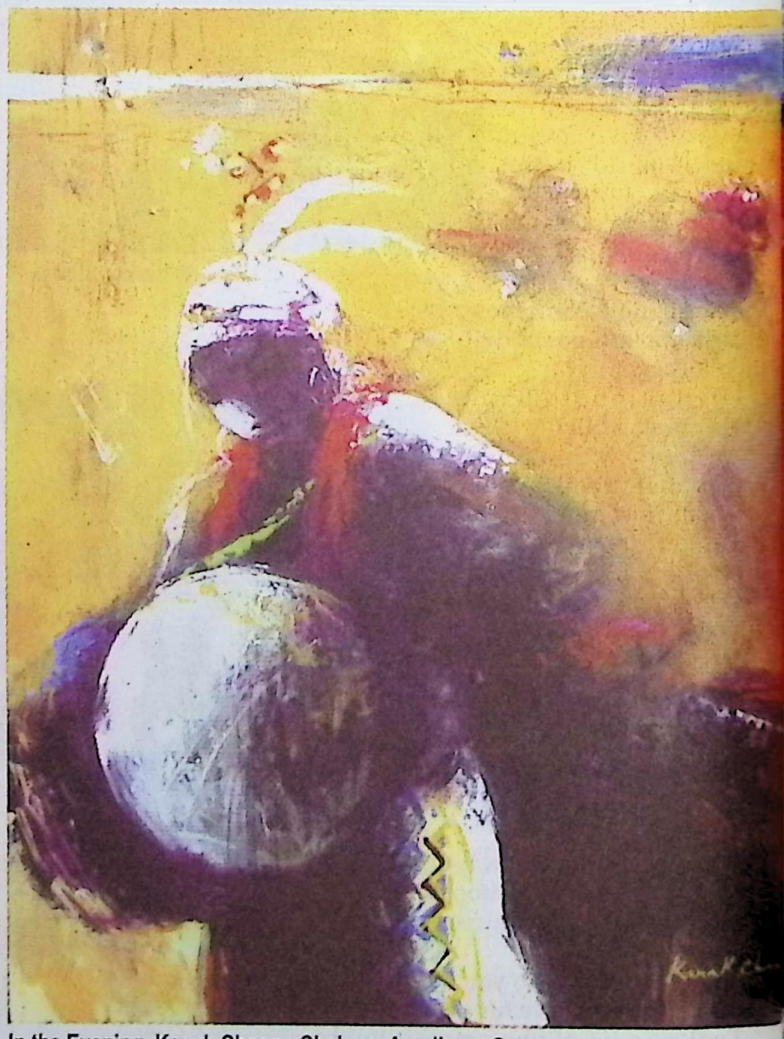
Kanak's Canvasses Lapped

FAYZA HAQ

Kanak Chanpa Chakma, who revels in her trips abroad, enjoyed every moment of her trips to China , Malaysia, other parts of Asia , and the US. In China alone she had the opportunity to meet more than a hundred artists, and was thrilled to have the opportunity to exchange her ideas and views with them. These included artists from England, the USA and Australia. The trip naturally gave Kanak access to the Great Wall , whose beauty and grandeur overwhelmed her, although she had seen it earlier on a previous occasion. Her view of the Forbidden City, gave her the opportunity to see the clothes, weapons, coins, furniture and jewellery used by the royal families of the past. To see these unusual artifacts of the past, and to be allowed where few people are, was an experience she said she would treasure all her life. Again, MaoTse Tung's tomb was also impressive and awe inspiring. "The Chinese truly revere their leader and stand in long queues to see his embalmed body," says Kanak.

The collection of foreign paintings in Beijing, originating from 300 countries, was also breathtaking, says Kanak. There were many hundred paintings by Chinese artists too. The rare opportunity to see both traditional and modern Chinese paintings was unusual indeed. "Centuries back, they painted on scrolls and brought in subjects like clouds, bamboo leaves, lotus flowers, bears, exotic birds, tigers, rivers, mountains and figures in long robes. Modern Chinese compositions, in turn, are huge and can compete with anything else in the world -- moving away from the traditional subjects, compositions and colours. Their abstract figures blended with the products of the contemporary world. However, beyond conventional greetings we managed to convey little else to the Chinese artists through our interpreters. We next went to Kunming and saw indigenous tribes whose heavy jewellery and clothes had similarities with those of our own Bangladeshi Hill tribes, which naturally delighted me. Their preservation of nature's greenery was also something to admire, and take lessons from," says Kanak.



In the Evening, Kanak Chanpa Chakma, Acrylic on Canvas.

At that time, Kanak had a solo exhibition of 30 paintings at Beijing at Art Land Gallery, which lasted for a month. The curators there felt that there was something in Kanak's art which was similar to that of contemporary Chinese paintings, and they were specially interested in her tribal figures and landscapes. "They were also keen on some of the depiction that related to Buddhism, as today too there are believers in Buddhism in China. The blending of impressionism style with depiction of contemporary Hill Tracts life and living appealed to them" says Kanak.

In Singapore and Malaysia, about the same time,