BACKGROUND

The first Medical Delegation, led by Dr. Shankar Bahadur Singh, the then President of Nepal Medical Association went to China in 1972. Following this, two doctors from China, Dr. Shang Tien-Yo and Dr. Ti Young stayed for a further one week after the 7th All Nepal Medical Conference at Kathmandu in April 1975. The second Nepalese Medical Delegation, consisting of seven members, was led by Vice-President Dr. Hemang Dixit. Its other members were Dr. Narayan Govinda Amatya, Dr. Puskar Raj Satyal, Dr. Mrigendra Raj Pandey, Dr. Dwarika Prasad Manandhar, Dr (Mrs). Savitri Gurung and Dr. Nanda Prasad Sharma. This is an account of that visit which took place from Sept. 15 to Oct. 6, 1975.

CHINA—THE SECOND TIME

Dr. Hemang Dixit

Contact between the Nepalese and the Chinese people has been going on since the time of Amshuvarma in the Seventh Century. Unlike our predecessors, who came via passes such as the Kyirong, we choose the aeroplane and reached Kunming via Rangoon.

Our impression of Kunming of Yunnan Province from the air was very favourable. From the air, except for the more taller buildings it could just as well have been Kathmandu valley with its various terraced fields. The red clay mountain on the other hand seemed to have been transported here from either the Trisuli or the Panchkhal area. The moment we stepped out on this 15th September afternoon, there was a musty odour that was all prevailing and whether this was due to the wet clay or the ready for harvesting rice, I could n't really tell. Anyway the reception at the airport could not have been
warmer and we the Seven Member Medical Delegation from Nepal were met by Dr. Kuo Kuang-hua, President of the Yunnan Branch of the Chinese Medical Association and a host of other dignitaries. Dr. Tu Pao-chung of the Chinese Medical Association and two of our interpreters Mr. Ku Teh-chang and Mr. Li Teh-lai had flown from Peking to Kunming to be able to meet us at the airport. With this our official visit to Yunnan or for that matter to the People's Republic of China had started.

As we proceeded from the airport to our hotel, what impressed us most were the wide roads but somehow these looked impersonal and relatively empty. In China we did not see much vehicular traffic, and what little there was seemed to be trucks and buses. It was bicycles, bicycles and bicycles. It is the mode of transport to carry people around the towns, workers to the factories, or farmers to the fields. It not only carried farm produce but also carried babies in side cars. The exploitation of the bicycle to its fullest extent seemed very rational. Not only did it save fuel for more urgent needs but it led to the development of a healthy population not burdened with problems of coronary heart disease. The other advantage of the lack of cars, due to there being no private cars, was that there was very little in the way of road traffic accidents.

During our three day stay we did notice that besides the heavy traffic consisting of trucks and buses, there were one, two, or three horse drawn carts, the buffalo drawn cart and even the hand drawn cart. The last ones seemed to carry grass or even farm produce. The animal drawn carts were carrying all sorts of items but coal seemed to be the main one. The three horse drawn cart seemed characteristic of Yunnan and when I queried it I was told that because of the undulating character of the countryside, with its slopes and descents, it was necessary to use three horses.

So to an outsider it seemed that whilst laying stress on the heavy trucks, mighty China was relaying on her labour force to solve her problems. Though tractors and mechanised ploughs were seen on the roads of countrysides, it was by and large the ordinary man or woman who doing most of the work.

A common sight in and around Kunming was to see men and women in wide brimmed straw hats carrying compost presumably of horse, buffalo and pig origin in buckets hanging from shoulder poles. So here was the basic fact—China, with her tremendous potential was relying primarily on her people and asking each to contribute his or her mite for the formation of a new society. All moving towards a final goal, but though everyone was moving in that direction, that spontaneous gaiety that one would expect in any people was sadly lacking.
The massive use of organic compost was stoutly defended but it made me wonder whether they had a lot of cases of tetanus. Apparently they don't have any cases for the simple reason that immunisation to protect against tetanus is not only given in childhood but that it is maintained during one's lifetime.

Whilst at Kunming we saw some of the hospitals and were told something of the services provided to the rural areas. Out of the total complement of any hospital, one-third or one-fourth of its staff are out at any one time in the rural areas, in accordance with Chairman Mao's teaching of 'In Health work, put stress on rural areas'. The Yenan Hospital, which we visited had in fact been started at Shanghai but following the Chairman's call the hospital had shifted to Kunming.

During the course of the hospital visits at Kunming we had our introduction to acupuncture. It is fantastic. Whilst one might argue that acupuncture treatment for various illness is psychological, one cannot say the same for acupuncture anaesthesia. To see patients undergoing operation for repair of hernia, part or total removal of thyroid, ovarian tumour, cataract and brain tumour under acupuncture anaesthesia is out of this world. To see is to believe, is all that one can say. With this however comes hope for us as a surgeon and anaesthetist from Nepal have recently returned from China after having done a course of study in acupuncture. Acupuncture is simple, beneficial and will save a substantial amount from our drug bill. What worries me about acupuncture however is the fear and the possibility that one might get serum hepatitis.

The main attraction at Kunming is the STONE FOREST - an area which is about 120 km. from Kunming. To get there we had to drive through a countryside which was literally full of harvest. The harvest was mainly rice, but with a difference. There, however they had two crops of rice one with the aid of the natural rainfall and another grown with the aid of water from the reservoirs, which seemed to be plenty in China. By all accounts it would be a bumper harvest and with the nine months or so of emergency stock in hand, things were indeed good. But coming back to the stone forest, it is a vast area of some 27,000 hectares, of which the central part is about 80 hectares. These very odd looking rock pillars come in all sorts of sizes and shapes and are so named because from afar it looks like a forest. A quotation from Chairman Mao has been carved on one of the prominent rock pillars. The many rock pillars in the stone forest were formed by rain water running through joints in very thick limestone, dissolving, percolating and splitting to give it various shapes. One can walk around inside, by the side and over the springwater
Another attraction at Kunming is the 'Sleeping Beauty Hills', so named because from afar, the small mountains so assembled give this contour. The hills have a number of temples which not only add to the beauty of the place but also give an account of the ups and downs since historical times. The most notable however is the Lungman or the dragon gate, carved out of the sheer cliff. Passing through a winding passage, dug and cut along the side of the precipice, we reached the Dragon Arch and the Rock Chamber. It is said that the work of chiseling the three massive figures in solid rock meant that the workmen had to suspend themselves from the cliff's edge and work. The main image showed a deity with a brush in one hand. Unfortunately the tip of the brush, which the artist was chiseling broke and the artist thinking that the Gods would be displeased with him committed suicide by jumping down from Lungman Gate.

Our last visit literally was to the Takwan Park in Kunming. A section of this park is devoted to medicinal plants. All the flowers and plants there seemed to have some medicinal property, whether for whooping cough, stopping bleeding or for arthritis etc. You think of a plant, it is a cure, made one think of its efficacy or whether the extracts were just harmless. But seeing the great stress laid on Traditional Medicine, the amount of research in it and the handsome dividends it is paying leave one with an enquiring mind.
On the 19th we went from Kunming to Shanghai and so flew over a place called Shaoshan, the place where Chairman Mao was born. The city of Shanghai, with a population of 10 million (nearly as much as that of Nepal), was certainly a contrast to Kunming. Our group of ten viz our seven member delegation plus Dr. Tu, Mr. Ku and Mr. Li were met at the airport by Dr. Fu Shan-lai, Leading Member of the Shanghai Branch of C.M.A. and other members.

In Kunming we had felt ourselves to be in a homely atmosphere - in Shanghai we came to a modern industrial city with its vast population. The greater number of trucks, trolley buses, bicycles and even rickshawas bore testimony to this fact. The absence of private cars on the roads was very conspicuous. Seeing the women bus drivers of Shanghai made one feel that women there had no necessity to celebrate 1975 as International Women's Year. The visit to Shanghai is memorable because of our visit to the Industrial Exhibition. Because of Shanghai's special position in industry this complex shows the ships, vehicles, machines, textiles and other consumer goods produced in China. For us doctors the climax was a visit to the No. 6 People's Hospital of Shanghai. There we met Dr. Chen and his colleagues and were told about their work. The medical workers created medical history when they rejoined the totally severed hand of an industrial worker to the stump of the forearm. This monumental work had taken 18 hours in all and the success in this spurred the workers to greater heights. Over the last twelve years they have rejoined 100 severed limbs and 300 fingers. In the case of a girl, the thumb of her hand was crushed. Now the thumb is the most important of the fingers and without it the function of the hand is not good. To solve this problem the surgeons cut off the second toe of one foot and put it in the place of the thumb. The girl now has a very useful and functional hand -- a hand with four fingers and one toe! Similarly we saw another girl who had a bone tumour in the upper arm. In the normal course of events the whole arm would have been cut off, but here the surgeons cut and removed the part of containing the tumour and rejoined the remaining parts of the arm together. This girl has a short arm but she is happy. To be alive, even with a short arm with which one can do the daily work, is better than being dead or having no arm at all. Similarly we saw workers whose severed feet had been rejoined to the leg stump to create once again a functional-leg.

Another highlight of our visit to Shanghai was of course to the Huangpu People's Commune, which is in the suburbs of this city. Having read and heard so much about
'Barefoot' doctors and communes, it was but natural that the interest of our delegation should have been aroused by these two topics. This particular commune occupied an area of about 3 by 5 kilometers and beside growing mainly vegetable it also had a few small industries. Production has been increasing at the commune—the pre-liberation figures were surpassed by those of the post-liberation ones and these in turn by those following the Great Leap Forward. The Cultural Revolution led to further advancement, so much so that things could not be better. Mechanisation is being introduced albeit in a small scale and the pacemaker is the call given by Chairman Mao — 'In agriculture, learn from Tachai'.

This particular commune consists of fifteen Production Brigades and there are four barefoot doctors to each brigade i.e. a total of sixty to each commune. Of these barefoot doctors two in each brigade are involved in curative work whilst two are involved in preventive work at grassroot level. These form the production brigade, provide medical service, do immunisations and give injections. Complicated cases are referred to the commune, county of city hospital. Of the four barefoot doctors one should be adept at conducting deliveries and is generally a woman. The commune hospital in turn, besides having the services of qualified medical school doctors also has fifteen barefoot doctors i.e. one from each production brigade. These barefoot doctors come here in rotation, either for one week in every four or for three months in every year. Whilst there, these barefoot doctors are taught by the there posted, qualified commune doctors or by the city or county hospital doctors who have in turn come there in answer to Chairman Mao's 'June 26th Directive'—In Health Work put stress on the Rural Areas!

However the ordinary day to day health work is carried on at the grassroot level by the Health Aids. These are appointed to each production team and are the ones who deal with minor cuts, abrasions and wounds. The health set up in a commune may therefore be summarised as follows:

Commune: Each commune has a commune hospital staffed by qualified medical school doctor plus about 15 barefoot doctors.

Production Brigade: Number comprising each commune varies but generally about fifteen. Each Brigade runs cooperative medical clinic with a barefoot doctor. Of the four barefoot doctors to each production brigade one is at the commune hospital for training at any one time.

Production Teams: About thirteen or so to each brigade and these have Health Aids in
attendance to deal with minor problem.

For the medical services provided by the commune each member pays two Yuans or Rs. 12.50 at present rates per year. This covers not only medical treatment but also for the cost of drugs. This system has many advantages for, with the Cooperative Medical Services and the barefoot doctor it means that health services are at one's door. It is a very economical service and is one that is heartily welcomed by the people.

But coming back to the Commune Hospital of this community of about five thousand households or about 25,000 people, one finds that the hospital is indeed the hub of all activity. It is staffed by qualified doctors and has departments of Medicine, both Western and Traditional, Dept. of Obstetrics Gynaecology, Paediatrics and Acupuncture. The barefoot doctors, as mentioned already, come here for what may be termed inservice training.

Now turning to the barefoot doctors - it has been rightly said that they are neither barefoot nor doctors. The term originated from the fact that these type of medical workers, working in the rice fields went about barefooted. It was this worker whose image caught the fancy of the masses and gave birth to the term of reference, which has stuck ever since. How does one become a barefoot doctor? After doing basic middle school, the student has to do two years of labour in a commune. If he has worked well and has shown aptitude for this type of work viz. to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow masses, he is recommended by the Lower and Middle Class Peasants to be a barefoot doctors. The initial training varies between three months to one year at the city, county or Commune Hospital or by the mobile medical teams. The training provides basic knowledge in emergency care, Hygiene, Prevention and therapeutic drugs, treatment of common and recurrent diseases, acupuncture and on Medicinal drugs.

After returning back to the production brigade which initially recommended him, the barefoot doctor is involved in preventive work and treatment. Refresher courses and training are usually at the commune hospital on a rotating basis and also from mobile teams that visit villages. During the course of their work these barefoot doctors not only prevent and treat diseases but they also collect medicinal herbs. The diseases that they treat are usually the common ones, but in times of difficulty they can always refer back to the qualified doctor at the commune, county or district level hospitals. In short they may be compared to our compounders of auxiliary health workers. A rose called by any other name is still a rose.

During our stay at Shanghai we had an opportunity to travel down the Hwang-Ho
river and look at the tankers and liners being made in New China. We travelled down by motor boat to where the Hwang-Ho and the Yangtse joined and from that point looked Eastward towards the China Sea.

Our visit to Shanghai being concluded we flew to Nanking on the 24th of September. Our journey took four hours over a countryside planted with rice, soya bean, sunflower and cotton. We were met at the airport by Dr. Yu Shih-Kai, Vice President of the Medical Association of Kiangsu Province, Dr. Yu Fu-ho, Leading Member and other dignitaries.

Till a few years back, when one thought of Nanking one thought of it as the temporary capital of the Kounintang, or of its association with Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Now however one thinks of it with reference to the new Yangtse river bridge, a remarkable feat of engineering, if ever there was one. When the bridge was first planned in 1958, during the Great Leap Forward, many foreign experts had said that it was an impossible task. Work began in 1960 and the bridge was finally completed in 1968. The huge bridge was built by the Chinese themselves. The two separate approach bridges on the two sides—one for the trains and the other for vehicles means that it is in fact five bridges combined in one. It is this bridge which has become the symbol of the Nanking of to-day.

Nanking has however retained its old charm. The ducks still lay double-yolked eggs! True a P. L. O* (people's Liberation Army) guard, in his olive green uniform stood at the hotel gate but somehow he seemed to disappear in the background. This capital of Kiangsu Province is a small city and it is because of this that one seems to find a certain serenity in Nanking. Perhaps it is the densely tree-lined streets of Nanking with the fresh and cool air of the environment which contribute to this. For beauty there is nothing to surpass the 2 or 3 rows of trees on each side. This tree explosion of Nanking is stupendous—before liberation there were 2,000 roadside trees, whereas now it is 243,000.

There has been great advancement in the health services in Nanking since liberation. Whereas before there were only six now there are over 40 of the District and County level type hospitals. The total medical personnel of 10,000 includes doctors, nurses and medical technicals. With the rise in the number of hospitals, because of adequate drug production drug costs are negligible. Before, one vial of Penicillin used to cost the equivalent of Rs. 15.20 whereas now it costs barely Rs. 2/-. Similarly a sulpha tablet which used to cost 20-25 pice now costs about 2 pice. Cost of an operation if one is not insured, and had to pay would be about Rs. 40/- for an appendix operation and Rs. 100/- for an operation on the
In China, one must however remember that not all drugs used are Western ones. Following Chairman Mao’s call—"Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology are a great treasure house and efforts must be made to explore them and raise them to a higher level"—great attention has been paid towards traditional medicine. The Traditional Medicine Production Unit which we visited was started in 1958 with 50 workers. Now it has been enlarged and has 250 workers. It makes a host of traditional medicine items such as tablets, pills, syrup and plaster. Its production now is five to six times that of its initial figures.

Our next visit i.e. to the Purple Mountain Observatory suddenly brought us back to 20th Century reality. Looking over its walls one sees the city of Nanking laid out below, whilst looking through the giant telescopes one could theoretically see the Universe above. It was after all this telescope which tracked China's first satellite. Other relics of interest here are the old astronomical instruments, which had at one time been taken away by the French and the Germans but has subsequently been returned.

Nanking has one of the Ming Emperor’s tombs, but it is a person of latter day China, who has left his stamp on Nanking. It is fitting that the Dr. Sun Yat-sen mausoleum is the final resting place should be in Nanking, amongst its beautiful hills and the evergreen trees. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who was a Cantonese, had installed a Nationalist Kuomintang Govt. in 1911. When Dr. Sun Yat-sen died in 1927 at Peking, the seat of the government was however at Nanking. Hence the building of the mausoleum here. The big flight of steps, the various pagoda like roofed structures in between, with the three statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen reflect the diversity of China at that time. The story goes that when Dr. Sun Yat-sen died and they planned to make a statue of him, they could not decide on the type of dress that would be shown on the statue. Because the people of the town at that time wore three types of dress, they decided to make three statues. So at the bottom we see a statue of him in Western dress and standing up. Half way, we see him sitting down attired in Chinese traditional clothes and finally in the inner mausoleum we see him lying down attired in the Chungsan dress. This dress was in fact the dress of the common people and is the dress which Chairman Mao wears.

We travelled overnight in the train from Nanking. Early the next morning we seemed to be travelling over a countryside which stood out in sharp contrast to the green fields
of the south. The sparse yield from the land was possibly because it was a much harder ground to till, and also due to the cold surrounding atmosphere. We were met at the station by our hosts Mr. Chao Mao-ping, Leading Member of Teinstein Medical Association and others. The most memorable part of this trip was yet to come. A simple incident which has left an indelible stamp in our minds. As we drove out of the station and towards our Friendship Hotel, we saw thousands of people lining the streets. We have never felt so important in our lives but unfortunately it was not for us. It was for Le Duan, Secretary of the Communist Party of North Vietnam, who was leaving Teinstein that day. Nevertheless, when people clapped, we clapped back from time to time, for otherwise it would have been very rude of us not to have done so.

Teinstein itself is a multi-industrial city of about seven million people. In the not very distant past, Teinstein had been divided up by eight nations viz. U.S.A., U.S.S.R., England, France, Austria, Belgium, Germany and Japan. From their enclaves, each nation did some sort of trade with the hinterland. Different parts of Teinstein, with their different architecture bear testimony to this fact. This fact is brought out more realistically if one visits the Santiaoashih Exhibition.

Teinstein is now divided into 12 districts and 5 counties. In the municipal area there are a total of 40,000 medical workers of which 10,009 are doctors. There are 7 big hospitals with 15,000 beds. Besides this the districts have total of 86 Neighbourhood hospitals and the counties have 206 Commune hospitals. Consequently, it follows that the 12 districts have been divided into 86 Neighbourhoods, each with a hospital. Each neighbourhood further divided into a number of lanes and there is a clinic in each, thereby creating a situation in which medical facilities are available within walking distance. There is also each district and in each county an Anti-epidemic station.

To meet the vast demand of health manpower, Teinstein boasts of a Medical School with students, a Paramedical School with 800 students, Nursing School having some 120 students and also 300 students learning Traditional Chinese Medicine. It is with such extensive health man-power training programmes in each province that China's needs are being fulfilled.

At Teinstein we met once again the Orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Shang who had visited Nepal in April '75. He and his colleagues had reintroduced the use of small splints and advocated early mobilisation for rapid joining of fractures. At the Nankai Traditional Medicine hospital in Teinstein we saw patients recovering from attacks of appendicitis


perforated peptic ulcer with the use of traditional medicine, and without any form of operation. The remarkable points in the health services were their Traditional Medicine and Acupuncture and the part that these play in health work. Great research is being done in Traditional medicine and it paying handsome dividends.

Our two day visit to Teinsteade coming to a close, we travelled once again by train to Peking. This trip was of short duration and we were soon at the massive Peking railway station. We were met there by Mr. Liu Hsueh-wen, Secretary General of the Chinese Medical Association, the Deputy Secretary General and also leading members of the Peking Branch.

Our journey to Peking on 30th Sept. '75 was indeed well timed by our hosts. A massive gathering of people from various walks of life and from different corners of the earth had gathered in Peking for the 26th Anniversary. Outside was ablaze of lights and sightseers and through this all we made our way to the Great Hall of the People. This is a massive building, as big as some of our palaces and was constructed to celebrate the 10th Anniversary. What is surprising was that this building with nine other major buildings were constructed in a period of ten months. Of course the Chinese period of construction is different in the sense that they first collect all the materials required and count the time from the date on which they start the actual construction. Working in shifts, both day and night makes such a feat possible.

We were very lucky people for we were invited to the dinner given by Premier Chou in the Great Hall of the People. There were, we were told 5,000 guests in this big hall. With ten people to each round table it means a hall capable of holding 500 round tables. To have served so many people would have been impossible and what in fact had been done was that all the food had also been laid beforehand and covered with cellophane paper. For drinks there were soft juices, beer, wine and of course 'Moutie'. The food consisted of various types of meat, soya bean preparation and also sweets. The point about drinks was that the moment you finished one, you were given another. When the 'toasts' started being proposed the 'Moutie' and wine started flowing and it was no wonder that the bottle was soon empty. We wisely declined the second 'moutie' bottle that was brought to our table. The highlight of the evening was a speech by the then Deputy Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-Ping saying that Taiwan would be liberated.

When the dinner finished and we came out even the broad streets of Peking had a traffic jam. After we finally reached the huge Peking Hotel complex, we came out for a
walk to Teia Am Mein Square. This is the huge square, ringed around by various important buildings, and it is here that massive gatherings of people take place. It was a blaze of lights but with a difference. On the stroke of 10.00 clock the lights were turned off, one by one and we returned back to our hotel. This was certainly an example of waste not want not.

1st October, ’75 was a cloudy day but by 7.00 A. M. people had started collecting and going to the Parks. By the time we got to the parks at 9.00 A. M. the show was in full swing. These two parks in the proximity of Teia Am Mein were the Chungshan Park and the park of the Working People’s Palace of Culture. There were various stalls with mechanised toys depicting work in around areas such as farms and factories etc. These were popular not only with children but also for others. Besides this, there were performances by each of the thirty provincial groups, amateur groups and children. Hearing the very small children sing a song, ‘We will liberate Taiwan’ was indeed thought provoking. Most impressive for us however was the various dances put on by brightly attired children holding paper bouquets or fans in their hands. The massive scale of the National Day celebrations can be realised by the fact that such display were going on in, not one but in six of Peking’s parks.

In the afternoon we went to the Summer Palace which consists essentially of the Longevity Hill and the Kunming Lake. This lake is supposed to be a replica of the one at Kunming. This lake and the Summer Palace were supposed ostensibly to have been constructed with funds, earmarked for the development of the navy. Starting from one end and by the side of the lake was a covered way called the Long Corridor. This corridor and the surrounding area was full of people. There was even a regatta on the lake. Suddenly there was a big commotion – people rushed here and there as a ‘house-boat’ came in to land. It transpired that a minister was coming to attend the celebrations and like his counterpart anywhere in the world, he certainly was the centre of attraction.

National Day celebrations in China though not so apparent on 2nd. October nevertheless still exerted their influence. All the six parks had their colourful buntings, the crowds were there but with a difference – this time there were a lot of children – more a sort of family outing. It was their free day – their chance to enjoy leisure after their National Day activities of dancing and games. Perhaps due to fear of losing valuable sightseeing time, some had a half or full loaf of bread, on a little piece of paper, in their hands and were busy munching away as they walked. A lot of others were clicking away with their
cameras, whilst others were having their photographs taken by professionals. This contrast in the crowds was very apparent in the Temple of Heaven complex with its two main buildings. The bigger of the two was a place to which the emperor went whenever the necessity arose to worship heaven. He would, stand directly under the central dome and in a loud voice plead to heaven. It was also a hall of prayer for good harvests.

In the midst of these festivities we found time to visit the Peking Friendship Store. For most of us it meant window or just glass-cases shopping at Peking, for after our visits to the Friendship Stores at Shanghai, Nanking and Teinestin, our funds were rather on the low side. A Chinese lantern and a silk or chiffon sari seem to have been bought by everyone. For visitors like us the Friendship Stores were ideal. No necessity to bargain and there was the comforting thought that what we were getting for our money was indeed worth it.

Our Hospital visits in Peking were restricted to a Children’s Hospital and a General Hospital. By this time, our visits to the five cities had given us a fair idea of medicine in China. Basically it is that they lay much more stress on prevention, believing rightly that it is much cheaper to prevent than to cure diseases. All this means much more stress on sanitation, cleanliness and immunisations to protect against diseases. Besides this, the campaign against the four pests viz. rats, flies, bed bug and mosquitoes has helped to improve the general health of the people. The effectiveness of this campaign is borne out by the fact that during our stay in China we saw very few flies. Coupled with this there is great spring cleaning twice a year. A week to 10 days before May 1st and October 1st every year -- everybody cleans everything -- especially one’s environment.

The visit to the Ming Tombs was also memorable. The approach road to the thirteen tombs here had various sitting and standing animals and also standing human figures on both sides. The first one we visited was called Chang Ling and the Emperor reigned from 1403-24. The tomb itself was built in 1407-13 or to put it more bluntly, once an Emperor came to the throne he started preparing his own tomb! One enters a big hall used for prayer. This has been built with wood of the Nambia tree -- a very strong and valuable wood. This massive building had a gate and behind this was the mound, under which somewhere and well hidden was the actual tomb. The other tomb that we went to was Ting Ling. The cost involved in its construction was apparently an amount which would, at that time, have fed ten million peasants for one year. The prayer hall of this tomb was burnt down during a peasant uprising. Consequently, following Liberation,
this partly destroyed tomb was excavated during 1956-58. After initial failure, the underground palace was stumbled upon. On display at the two side halls are the various gold utensils and ornaments, tapestries and jade figures. As we drove back through the valley of the Mings, we could see the other eleven tombs in the distance. They seemed to be getting into a state of disrepair. The emperors lie with all their worldly goods, but what the population at large sees is a big mound of earth with plenty of trees planted on it. The crumbling prayer hall, and the massive gates in a state of disrepair, stand in marked contrast to the bustling world around. — 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new'.

Last but not least impressive of all what we saw was of course our visit to the Great Wall. This Great Wall was built during various periods of history to prevent hordes from the North coming to Peking. Its total length is six thousand (6,000) KILOMETERS and it weaves like a snake over mountains and dales. Of course it has no useful function now and is just a historical legacy. Parts of it are in a state of disrepair, and it seems rational not to waste time, labour and money on something which has out-lived its function. True, the parts visited by sightseers are in a top condition of maintenance. To walk over these huge ramparts, in a path in which two cars can pass occurs only once in a lifetime.

It is true that we walked up the straight and narrow path. We saw what we were meant to see. Nevertheless, a trip such as this occurs only once but it leaves impressions.
and memories to last a life-time.

Our official visit now nearly over we flew back from Peking on the 6th of October. Our old friends at Kunming were on hand to greet us at Kunming airport. A hurried lunch at the airport and we flew on to Rangoon. We had been away for three weeks from our families and friends. It had been a fully packed, interesting three weeks but we were glad to be back home for Dasain.