

About Nurses and Nursing

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NURSING CARE is no more a task-oriented, fragmented care, but it demands of a nurse to look after the total care of the patient. The traditional concept of nurse as subservient to the doctor should vanish fast when we consider the nurse as a care provider, making nursing decisions. A nurse is a member of the health team and has unique functions to perform for the patient in an independent manner. The nurse will depend on the doctor for accurate diagnosis, prescription and treatment, while the doctor will depend on the nurse for accurate observation, reporting and total care based on the nursing process, i.e. assessment of the need, planning, implementation and evaluation of the care. It is a dynamic and continuous process.

In nursing, we have to preserve the ancient values and adjust itself to newer developments and problems. As stated by Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Survival means renewal. If we do not renew ourselves, we cannot survive. Things which are built for ever are for ever building". This is what is needed most in nursing today. In order to survive, we have to renew our knowledge, skills and attitude. There is a need to constantly ponder over the ways and means of promoting the cause which we have undertaken. The caring aspect which is our domain needs to be met with compassion, dedication and seriousness. It has to become almost an obsession for us and a way of life.

I often think of the candle lighting ceremony for nurses performed during graduation. To me it denotes a great meaning which is both joyful and painful in the life of a nurse. Even in this modern age, with all the energy and luminations available, a candle is the most handy thing if the lights go off suddenly. It will soon burn to spread light to the rescue of all. But it has to burn and become extinct itself serving for others. The nurse too, in her life, has to do a lot of sacrifice for the care of the sick. Hence, I

feel candle lighting is a very solemn ceremony for nurses.

I consider myself to be first and foremost a nurse teacher who should try to bring out the best in each student. Knowledge and skill is not enough, development of the right attitude is the hardest task we have to undertake. In this age of scientific advancements, and promotion of opportunities for women, we have to try to attract our young girls to this very important profession, to ensure a promising career for themselves, and to build a healthy nation. Education under favourable conditions would bring out springs of imagination and innovation in nursing care. Qualities of honesty, character and goodwill are the backbone for better care. We need to be more liberal in our ways of thinking to allow promising young nurses to experiment on newer ways of meeting the challenge. Our new education policy is based on the maxim that a nation is built on its educational institutions. Thus, there is an urgent need to review the policies of nursing education to ensure promotion of health, prevention of illness and provision of adequate care during illness. Facilities for higher education on large scale for nurses need to be launched like correspondence course. In order to promote this idea, we in the College of Nursing, P.G.I., have conducted a 10-day workshop for nurse educators on national education policy and nursing and disseminated the idea and have brought out various recommendations. This workshop was funded by the University Grants Commission. The proceedings have been printed and circulated among the nursing leaders, general educators, administrators, universities, and governmental and private organisations. Publicity was given through radio, newspapers and television. Still wider publicity is needed to promote this idea. I am glad to note that some universities have already started the spade work in this direction and I am confident that we will enter this arena by the dawn of the 21st century if not earlier.

I am conscious of the fact that the image of the nurses among the people is still not satisfactory. Even though a person will take care to choose a doctor for his treatment, he is least bothered about the nurse who cares for him. This is mainly due to ignorance, and mass public education is required to ward off this apathy. Every nurse and all her well-wishers will have to join hands on a war footing to eliminate this ignorance. At the same time, each nurse must introspect herself and work hard to keep her knowledge and skill up to date and function with professional competence. There is no need to feel discouraged, but one must make a deliberate attempt to come out of this social evil. I have no doubts about whether we will achieve our goal or not, but we have to work hard to get the status. We have to be our own spokesmen/spokeswomen and not wait for some one else to do it for us.

As Nursing is primarily manned by women, the status of nurses is closely linked with that of the status of women in society. At this crucial time, when the Government is making all efforts to raise the status of women by preparing a 'National Perspective Plan for Women' and strategies for its implementation, I am sure we can hope for improvement. Moreover, the Government had set up a High Power Committee to study the problems of nurses and a National Convention for Nurses was held. The outcomes of these are sure to produce positive developments. Let us do our part diligently to show that we are proud of our profession.

Professional organisations have to do a lot but after all what is an association? Each member will have to make the association great by hard work and co-operative endeavours as the dictum denotes "United we stand, divided we fall". Let us join hands and try to raise the status and standard of nursing and nurses. I am of the firm belief that the nurses have to start the war towards bringing nursing to its highest order in the country.

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