

THE LAMP SHE LIT

Mrs. M. Menon

THE history tells about Florence Nightingale and many of us nurses have learned about her contribution towards the progress of nursing. But most of us do not take seriously of her adventurous deeds. The birth day of the "Lady of Lamp" gives us an occasion to recall her exemplary life and activities.

Florence Nightingale was born on 12th May, 1820 to wealthy English parents at Florence in Italy—Her father was a learned man. He knew many foreign languages and had travelled widely.

Florence was serious natured, and knew many European languages. At the age of 17 she went to Europe to complete her education. She was interested in politics and people, so travelled in many places, met some of the outstanding people of France. Social conditions and charitable institutions attracted her attention.

In her childhood she used to visit sick people in neighbourhood and had a sympathetic heart towards them. She thought that she had been called by God to do nursing and education work. She visited the poor and tried to relieve the sick.

At home she met many social reformers. She studied sanitary reforms of Sir Edwin Chadwick. In Europe she made

friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Herbert who wanted to start a hospital in England. She visited Alexandria and Egypt and learned about the works of sisters of Charity at the age of 19 years. In Greece she studied the organisations of schools and orphanages of American missionaries. In Berlin she visited many hospitals. In 1850 she visited Kaiserworth of which she had earlier heard, for two weeks and understood that systematic training for nurses is essential and in 1851 she stayed on for three months training. In 1852, she received her parents consent for going into nursing. After that she made many changes in nursing and showed that she was an able organizer and administrator.

During Crimean war from 1854 to 1856 England and France helped Turkey against war with Russia. Wounded English soldiers had no proper care. Word reached England about conditions of English soldiers in Crimea. Appeal was sent by them for help. Hearing this Florence Nightingale wrote to her friend who was minister of War, that she would help and do service to them. With the permission of Government she prepared 38 nurses. They reached Scutari in Turkey where there were two hospitals.

Florence was assigned one hospital with 15,000 patients to care for. Five to six nurses shared one room—Wards were crowded and dirty. There was no sanitary arrangements. Pa-

tients were mostly on straw beds in rooms with no ventilation. There were few sheets of rough canvas. There were no hospital clothes, soap, towel or basin. No washing used to be done. Soldiers were still in their blood soaked uniforms. Serious patients couldn't eat. It took four hours to serve meal for all patients. Food was poorly cooked. Cholera and contagious diseases spread and more soldiers died of communicable diseases. Army surgeons and officers did not want women helpers. But Florence Nightingale took initiative to serve and improve conditions. She used her own money. The following are some of her good works.

She got several hundred brushes and cleaned wards. The patients were bathed and put on clean clothes. The kitchens were opened and food according to patients' need was served in time. The hospital building was repaired. Proper disposal of dirt and wastes was arranged.

Strict discipline was imposed on nurses.

The hospital was reformed and within 6 months death rate came to two per cent.

By this time she was liked and appreciated by many doctors who learned much about management. They understood that cleanliness and proper services are essential for relief of pain and disease and to save life.

Mrs. M. Menon is Nursing Suptd.-cum Sister-tutor Ganpatrai Hospital Bhiwani, Haryana.

THE NURSING JOURNAL OF INDIA

Nightingale spent her evening, visiting sick. She wrote letters to their families. Reports on patients were also sent to the minister of war. She set up laundries in which soldiers wives found jobs. Post office was opened so that soldiers could send money to their families.

In 1856 when peace was declared the hospital was closed. Miss Nightingale and her nurse colleagues returned to England. On her return she refused honours from English people. On the suggestion of Sir Sydney Herbert, Minister of war, a fund was asked to start a training school for nurses. The nurses training school was started in 1860.

Post War Activities

She wrote books on hospital administration on efficiency and on keeping soldiers healthy. These methods have been used in many countries. She worked for better sanitation of British soldiers in India. Although she did not visit India, she gained remarkable knowledge about the conditions in India. Her various books on nursing continue to be a guide to other countries.

When she was 88 years old, she remained in her room and worked hard by writing. King Edward conferred on her the merit. In 1909 she was granted freedom of the city of London.

Nightingale School at St. Thomas Hospital was opened in June 1860. Some principles that Nightingale advocated were:

- (1) Nursing Education must be directed by a nurse.
- (2) Nurses should live in a home where they can develop moral character and discipline:
- (3) Nurses should have education so that they know 'why' to teach others.
- (4) Nurses must have practical training in the wards in addition to theoretical learning.
- (5) Theory and practice must be co-related.
- (6) Bed side teaching to be done by ward sisters.
- (7) Nurses should have diaries in which case studies to be noted.

As a result of Miss Nightingale's work the attitude towards the nursing changed and a new career opened up for women. Between 1860-1893 the Nightingale system of training nurses spread to all parts of the world.

Conclusion

Nightingale was a good learned Lady who put in practice what she learnt and worked for the betterment of sick as well as healthy not only for her own country but for the whole world and up graded the standard of nursing as profession of humanitarian work keeping in mind the teaching of Christ, "Love your neighbour as thyself". For such service education, understanding of others, selfless endeavour, a good mind and sacrifice are essential. These qualities were best exemplified in her and she attained profound success which can be emulated by all health workers.

On 13th August 1910 she died peacefully in sleep. But she will be remembered by most as long as the world and nursing profession exist.

APPLICATION FORM FOR

INTEREST SECTIONS' MEMBERSHIP FOR TNAI MEMBERS ONLY

Nursing Education Section/Public Health Nursing Section/Nursing Service Section.

Life Membership fee Rupees 50/- Per Section.

Send this form to The Secretary TNAI, L-17, Green Park, New Delhi-110016.

1. Name (in full) Miss/Mrs/Mr/Sr.....
TNAI No.....
2. Designation.....
3. Present Address.....
.....
.....
4. Home Address.....
.....
.....

Date.....

Signature.....