

CHILDREN'S PLIGHT—WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

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RECALLING the profound impact of revelation of tiny naked bodies of little kids, one becomes too poignant. The naked bodies then disappearing with an intense velocity, leaving behind fading shades of silhouette of their tiny figures and emerging into the lush green fields of the country side of the Madhya Pradesh. Even to-date the gray matter of the viewer carries clear prints of the scene. Who were these creatures after all? These were the Advasi children, behaving in a manner described above on the sight of their so-called sophisticated species of mankind. These tribal children are only faintly aware of the existence of the their so-called civilized brethren and feel threatened even on a simple encounter. The matter does not end here with these children, but the 75 per cent children living in the rural areas are only slightly better in the grasping of their environment where there are other categories of human-beings.

IYC continues marching with steady grace. One can come across abundance literature valuable but is mostly repitious. It brings in optimism and skepticism. Since experience is the best teachers people would automatically question the achievements related to certain other social programmes and one such programme was, Women's Decade which was inaugurated some times back. The programme that started with enthusiasm was left to its own fate. Will IYC suffer similar fate? Let us cross our fingers.

UN declaration of rights of children is a great decision. While attending the inauguration of IYC, Delhi. The Education Minister Mr. Chunder and Begum Abida Ahmed the patron of the IYC Committee have emphasized the exigency to freedom of children from the bonds of child labour. It is the plight of our 10.7 million chil-

dren employed out of 180.4 million total work force of the country. It is shocking to know that this figure is highest in the world. These children are employed for various reasons, viz., socio-economic status of the family and in most cases accompanied by too many children. It is traumatic to know that these children are employed by those who very well understand the needs of the children. The inhuman act is manifested by selfishness on the part of the employer, simply because it is not his child. Here, most appropriately, I can cite example of Kaushallya, a bright looking, bouncing, feminine, tiny creature. She is pretty, since it was cold damp day accompanied by sudden splashes of winter rain, she sort of snugged herself only the upper one-fourth of her body with a small bathing towel. It was kind of cute to watch her. Who is this beautiful creature? She is an employee eight year's old 'Little Miss' working as a part time employee in a beauty parlour of our capital city, which is humming the songs of IYC. It is further regretful that the employer and the workers are extremely apathetic toward this child. This child on my enquiry told me that she studies in the evening. Therefore child labour is a major area for practical intervention, rather than intellectualization of the problem.

Preventive legislation to stop child labour is the need of the day. Punitive measures should be employed in case of overstepping of the legislation. The children and parents should be made aware of the legislation so that exploitation can be prevented.

According to Human Rights free compulsory education for all children is mentioned, it is an accepted fact that education is scant for children, because of rapidly increasing population. According to one study out of every hundred children

who joined the class only 40 left by the end of year. The number differs from State to State. Over and above all this, the children of tribals and of backward communities are greatest victims of this insufficiency. In addition there are too many drop outs from the school register.

Education is a very important area and it should not relate only to procuring degrees but should be geared to the practical problems of life. President Sanjiva Reddy, on the eve of IYC said, "Education should stress the need for inculcating time-honoured tenets of compassion, mutual tolerance and oneness of mankind in children." There is need for free compulsory education for the poor children. A special emphasis is to be laid down on the education of the girls to be a good mothers and house wives and the boy to be a good husband and father. In addition adult education for the mothers and fathers is the need of our time. Health education should be integrated at all levels like schools homes and in the health institutions. Child to child programme can be very exciting and useful. The children can be most creative in their ideas, for instance in a School at Guatemala in central America where this programme is practised in the schools. On enquiry by the teacher as to what will be the example for dehydration caused by diarrhea in children, one child brought a beautiful rose bud in the water and another one without water and the one without water was withered. So, if a child with diarrhea does not get water, he is like withered rose which may perish at any time. A beautiful example.

The right of the child to affection, love and understanding lies in multifacet social and economic factors. These factors may be enumerated as degree of harmony in the

family, educational standard, economic life, type of socio-economic structure. For instance if a mother is unhappy because she did not bring desired amount of dowry from her parents, she will be treated very cruelly by her in-laws and husband. She will naturally be unhappy. Without doubt this will affect the relationship with the children. Some is the plight of children of the divorced parents, unwed mothers, handicapped and poor children.

Nutritional problems are vast and have tremendous implications on the physical and mental health of the child. Out of 1,500 million children of the world, 250 million (1/6 of the world) are Indian children who are mostly deprived and undernourished. On the day of inauguration of the IYC, the Prime Minister of India Mr. Morarji Desai said, "It is on children that humanity can build foundation of a bright future". Keeping in view the plight of our 250 million children, the national plan of action is designed and focusses on the following five areas, viz., health care, nutrition, education, protective legislation and fund raising for child welfare activities.

Nutrition is one of the major killer and retard the functional capacity and the growth of the children and decrease the resistance to infection. Malnourished children usually die of measles, diarrhea, respiratory infections and other common diseases of childhood which are not serious in well nourished children. In the words of Dr. H. Mahler, WHO Director-General, "poor malnourished parents produce malnourished children who in turn will become poor and malnourished parents. This vicious spiral must be broken by improving child health and nutrition level".

Considering the health care areas for the children of our country the existing services cater to the only four per cent of the physically handicapped, two per cent of the blind, two per cent of the deaf, and two per cent of the known mentally

retarded child population. Some of the States do not have hospitals for the children at all. What to say of the hospitals, the facilities in the form of educating mothers to prevent the children from the killer diarrhoeas and other diseases which can be easily prevented are very scant.

Nurse can contribute to the cause of children in many ways. The ways may be small but the results can be big. Let us for a moment visualize what are you capable of doing in connection with the child care. I can foresee that you will be surprised at your abilities and will start believing that you are the best trained person to look after the child. Above all you are the only one among the health team who knows the principles of health education, nutrition, hygiene, infection, rest play, and prevention of infection. The need for proper education for the child is not alien to you. In other words you know well what is meant by a healthy child. What are the needs of the child to grow into a healthy individual?

At whatever level she works, the nurse has opportunities to contribute to the health and welfare of the children. She can help in planning the programme, giving suggestions for child care by participating at various levels and teaching others wherever she is. Teaching can be conducted in the homes, hospitals, schools and in any place where there is need. A most vital role of all, nurse can play is of health education, drawing people out of their ignorance, fatalism and dependency on health authorities to solve their problems. She can equip people with knowledge, relevant to their needs and also desired skills that would enable them to care for children and be reliant on their available resources. This teaching can be under taken with families and with the children in groups and individually. Child to child programme in the schools will be a big step forward in the IYC.

Nurse should see that health care services are reaching out to the under privileged and undeserved population in urban slums, tribal areas and other communities. This can be done either by working directly in these area or through the hospitals when attending children or mothers. Outpatient Department is a very suitable place for this purpose.

Nurses should become more aware of the needs and problems of the handicapped abandoned, neglected, and juvenile delinquent children. Since she is not equipped to look after these children alone she has to work with other members of the health team and allied workers wherever she is. A need to find out practical solutions for these children is very obvious.

In conclusion we can say that intensive health education accompanied by team work to participate in the socio-economic development of the people nurses can say that they have won half the battle. Maternal and child health, nutrition problems, unhygienic environment, communicable diseases must be focus of our attention at all times.

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When there are none among the 2½ decades old R.N. R.M.S. possessing any post-certificate nursing diploma and degree, those with better qualifications do have promotional avenues opened to them. Why to grouse at them? Who prevented the R.N. R.M.s. from acquiring post-certifications? Whose mistake is it that they rot for above 2 decades in the same cadre? They should have felt the need for further learning after their basic course to go up the ladder of promotions. Because the Government was all along following the principle of strict seniority, the R.N. R.M.s are making least efforts to equip themselves with further qualifications.

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