

Mrs. Gloria Senador on **NURSING IN THE PHILIPPINES**

It was not difficult to spot Mrs Gloria B. Senador in the crowded lounge of Vigyan Bhavan during the Asian Regional conference of the Red Cross, last month. Almost everyone seemed to know her, a fact that speaks volumes about the impact she must have made on the international gathering at New Delhi.

Mrs Senador is Director, Nursing Services and Fund Raising of the Philippines National Red Cross and we had naturally singled her out to know the perspectives of nursing in somewhat comparable conditions in another Asian country. The pre-lunch time allotted to us was short and we came down to hard facts, soon after the formal introduction.

What was the main thrust of the discussions at the Red Cross conference at New Delhi?, was our first question. Mrs Senador said that the main concern was primary health. A quick browsing of her paper on National Red Cross Development Planning in Asia, a few minutes before our meeting, revealed that Mrs Senador herself was concerned greatly with this aspect of public health. Mentioning in considerable detail the findings of Donald Transley and H. Acevedo, she had prepared a comprehensive agenda for worthwhile primary health schemes.

In Rural Areas

Talking of the nursing situation in the Philippines, we asked: "Do you have any problems in finding nursing personnel for the rural areas?"

As if she was waiting for the question, she quipped: "Oh, yes, there used to be a lot of hesitation on the part of our trained nurses to go and serve in the rural areas some time back. But the Government came up with a regulation which now requires all medical and nursing graduates to serve in the countryside for at least six months as a pre-requisite to their joining the profession. This is, in fact, called

Rural Health Practice Programme and is effectively implemented."

Brain Drain

The next obvious question of ours was regarding Brain Drain of Nurses. According to Mrs Senador, there is a heavy flow of trained nurses from her country to the Western countries, and, more recently, to some of the oil rich countries of West Asia. The latest count revealed the existence of about 56,000 trained nurses in her country out of which about 18,000 were serving abroad. About 7,000 nurses are now passing out of the Philippine colleges and schools every year and a considerable number out of that were attracted to the more remunerative jobs abroad. The Government has opened an Overseas Employment Development Board which takes care of the nurses' employment problems in other countries.

Fascination for White

Mrs Senador joined the nursing profession soon after her formal schooling and collegiate education, without bothering a bit to look for any other career. What was responsible for her taking to nursing like a duck to water? Was there any special fascination for this vocation, or some family influence?, we asked.

"Oh, no family influence. As a

young girl, I was fascinated by the spotless white uniform of the nurses and wanted to join their lot which I did as soon as I could after my formal education", she said with some feeling.

Her smartly tailored yellow frock and a spotted black scarf entwined round the neck like a collar indicated that she could take to any sartorial discipline rather naturally. Moreover, her fascination for white took her to nursing, and not to Karate or any other sport, is a measure of her thoughtful concern for the noble profession. Interestingly, by becoming a nurse, she set a tradition: three of her four younger sisters became nurses, subsequently: the fourth one, for some odd reason, chose a career in commerce education.

Nursing in the Philippines, according to her, is no longer taken to be a profession for any particular class of the society. Girls from all classes are now opting for the profession and this augurs well for the country.

Mrs. Senador's chicken soup had become tepid by now and it was time for us to leave her for a quick lunch. We took leave, remembering only later that we could not get a tip from Mrs Senador on the crucial aspect of fund raising, that being one of her primary assignments for the Red Cross. We thought we could meet subsequently, but that was, somehow, not to be. Maybe, we ask her now to write for the *Journal*, on what all she does to raise funds for the good cause.

Scribe

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Alice Zachariah

Secretary/Treasurer
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