

Nurses as Agents of Change

In order to perform their duties nursing graduates should be trained not only to become nurses, but also to act as agents of social change. Their outlook should be preventive and community oriented, says **R.N. SINGH**, President, U.P. State Branch, **TNAI**.

THE year 1977 can be said to be the year of Community Health Nursing in this country, because an intensive and extensive programme of Community Health has been planned under the dynamic leadership of our Honourable Health Minister, Raj Narain Ji, to carry health services to the doors of the community in the remotest areas which had so far been neglected completely.

It is heartening to note that the Public Health Section of the Trained Nurses' Association of India under the Chairmanship of Mr. Kailash Chandra Aggarwal has organized its First All India Community Health Nursing Conference. The theme chosen "Socio-Economic Realities, Health of the Community and the Practice of Community Health Nursing" is very much in tune with the declared health policy of the Union Health Ministry. It is also an appropriate theme to mark the birth anniversary of the founder of modern nursing, the Lady with the Lamp, Miss Florence Nightingale who was very much interested to improve the health of the people of India. This in itself is an achievement of this Association, because we have been advocating the value of Community Health Nursing programmes all along and our views have reached the people in authority and are receiving the needed attention.

Socio-Economic Development

The health of our countrymen is basic to its socio-economic development. It is rather difficult to comprehend economic development without parallel improvement in the health of the people. If we were to achieve rapid progress in raising the living standards of our people, health and prosperity of the people should improve side by side. Of course, we are fortunate to have a dynamic leadership in the Ministry of Health under Raj Narain Ji who is committed to the task of improving the health and welfare of the community in no small measure.

There has been a lopsided development of medical technology and the provision of health services in our country. Therefore, it is but imperative that in spite of having huge investments in sophisticated hospitals, medical and nursing education, etc., the vast population of the country has not received any benefit of the so called advances in medical and allied sciences.

The low level of health and nutrition of these people has not only manifested itself in terms of morbidity

and mortality rates but also affected human development and capacity of individual, to develop their potentialities and lead a productive life. Illness and poverty are so interlinked that in order to free people from economic bondage and cycle of poverty, programmes aiming at promotion of health and prevention of disease should receive equal emphasis.

The past health care approach in our country has largely been curative and unrelated to the realities in the country. The approach had been to provide sophisticated medical care to the privileged few at the cost of simple promotive and preventive health care facilities to the majority, who are in need of it most and usually poor and socially and geographically remote to benefit from such facilities.

Nursing Education

Coming to nursing education with which we are intimately associated, a similar kind of distortion and irrational approach exist. Nursing educators and administrators talk glibly about the importance of Community Health Nursing, but very few people in authority make any provision for providing the required facilities and staff and meet the challenge adequately. I hasten to add that things are changing and I hope we will have a big role to play in shaping the course of nursing education in the country. The entire nursing curriculum should change. The Western model of Nursing curriculum has only ended in preparing the nurses to work to some extent in sophisticated and West oriented hospitals. This has inherent fallacies and health is wrongly defined. It may be suitable to consumer societies of the West, but not to our society whose needs and problems are different.

Therefore, a new model of nursing education is required to meet the challenge adequately of the new health policy of the Indian Government.

In view of the changed political situation and the stated concern of the new Government about the total development of the community an integrated approach of health care is necessary. Integrated Health Care would mean that the health infrastructure in the country should be coordinated with development in the fields of agriculture, nutrition, sanitation, education and so on.

Many models have been adopted by eminent persons in the field and the latest is the one advocated by Raj Narain Ji. The objective of the system is very clear and should meet the health need of the majority of the population through a package of health programme which includes control of communicable diseases, basic sanitation, maternal and child health and family welfare, nutrition, first aid, elementary medical and nursing care and so on.