

TOWARDS A BETTER PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

In these days of democratic revolutions, the nursing profession needs independence. Non-nursing personnel should not occupy top posts in nursing administration. Only by giving nurses scope for decisive action can we provide the much wanted service to the vast majority of our people, says R. L. SHARMA, Lecturer, College of Nursing, Jaipur.

We are living in a fast developing democratic world where social changes in political, educational, administrative, scientific and technological areas are going on at a high speed, and it seems to be generally agreed that the outstanding characteristic of modern unstatic society in comparison with societies of the past is that it is intensely dynamic and the scientists and inventors are chiefly responsible for these changes. Nursing lies within the medical and health area where changes are likely to be sweeping. The factors responsible for the drastic revolutionary changes in nursing include the increasingly felt health needs of the society. International trends in nursing profession, economic changes, new developments and research in service, specialization, increased industrialization, expansion of community health services, government support to health programmes, and love for democracy are a few in number and have influenced nursing in India and abroad.

According to these factors there is need for change in the philosophy and objectives of the nursing profession as the society is anxiously waiting for its comprehensive health care by the nurses with their special knowledge, understanding, attitude, skills and competence for their expert services by understanding the human relationships and new structural changes in the society. The following are some of the areas in which the nurse is instrumental in initiating change with her expanded role in the modern society.

Professional Leadership

The first and foremost changes that can be initiated by the nurses are to strengthen the professional association of which all the Nurses are proud and form the foundation to survive. The TNAI is a body of professional nurses who join together in an association with the specific aims to solve the problems of its members and the profession, upgrading education, and developing nursing as a competent profession, and there is no doubt that TNAI is helping its members in every respect. But for the survival of any association finance is very important and, therefore, cooperation and help from the members are also very important. The TNAI is not able to press effectively its demands due to comparatively poor membership and unless the membership is doubled or tripled the association may not be strong and effective.

Out of more than 80,000 nurses in India only about 12,000 nurses are the members of TNAI. Unity is strength and without unity we can not achieve our goal. As every doctor is a member of Indian Medical Association, every nurse must be the member of TNAI, so that it may work towards the betterment of the nursing profession. There should be a good motivation, and targets of getting new members should be allotted to nursing leaders like Principals, Deans, Professors, Nursing Superintendents and other active persons. Election patterns should be changed and polls should be conducted at different polling booths at district and state hospitals so that more members can participate and utilize their votes. Monthly meetings at PHC, district, State and Central levels should be organised to increase membership and upgrade the profession. More scholarships for higher education to the needy personnel must be initiated for the growth and development of nursing education.

Representation in Parliament

Another area where lies our greatest scope for change in nursing profession is to get a seat in Parliament. Out of 200 Members of the Parliament of Finland 43 are women. In the past elections 4 nurses were elected, three of them were Public Health Nurses and all four represented different parties. This shows a drastic change in the society of Finland. But, as in India, out of the estimated 80,000 trained nurses, only 12,000 are current members of TNAI, it seems that the Association does not represent the highest number of nurses in the country and the Government of India does not recognise it for a seat in Parliament. Therefore, it is urgently required that all nurses of India must join TNAI. Further, they must have a good interpersonal relationship with the society and more emphasis must be placed on community health nursing care where 80 per cent of the total population is residing and better recognition can be given by the society.

Independence of the Profession

Until and unless the profession is free from the clutches of doctors, the profession would reflect a Master-Servant relationship and would be managerial or technical in nature. The doctor administrators who even do not know the differences between the training courses of ANM, LHV, General Nursing, B.Sc. Nursing, Post-Basic B.Sc. Nursing, present the real hurdles in the way to nurses' development. They do not know the merits of these courses and think that all nurses are the same and will have to work under the medical personnel. The promotions of the nurses are done by doctor administrators and not by nursing administrators. They also do not allow the nurses to go for higher education on deputation with salaries, and

nurses remain stuck to their fate. Therefore, there is need for change and our nursing leaders should come forward and fight for our rights of an independent profession and it is an open fact that unless the profession is freed from these shackles, nursing can not be recognised as a profession, though it is meeting almost all the criteria for a noble profession. The I.C.N. welfare division has rightly said that where the professional association does not play its proper role in establishing economic, social and departmental promotional conditions for its members, nursing in that country will not survive as a profession.

Therefore, in these days of democratic revolutions the Nursing profession needs independence. Non-nursing personnel should not occupy the post of Director of Nursing Services or other administrative posts. There should be a separate Director of Nursing in every State and he/she should be the head of the department.

Barefoot Doctors

Recently our Union Health Minister, Mr. Raj Narain, declared that there is need for barefoot doctors in the country, who can serve the rural areas and can be posted on every mile of the community. Here, I can say that the ANMs, LHV's, General Nurses, B.Sc. Nurses and M.Sc. Nurses can work cooperatively as multi-purpose health workers on various posts like Community Health Nursing Officers, Community Health Nursing Practitioners and likewise and can take this challenge of barefoot doctors to serve the community as a whole and to improve the health of the nation, thus achieving the new philosophy and goal of womb to tomb health care to the total community.

The nurses should rise up and work everywhere in the rural areas of the nation and should show the efficiency of their work in fulfilling the desire of the Health Minister. But, for this purpose, there have to be some facilities so that the nurses can work independently and can provide direct community health nursing care to the society. The power of administration should be given to the nurses in Primary Health Centres for independent nursing care, and they should be posted as Nursing Officers/District Nursing Officers or Nursing Supervisors as recommended by the Bhole Committee. There should be chains and lines of authority from top to bottom and *vice versa*, from the rural nurse upto the Nursing Advisor at New Delhi. The social stigma can be removed from the hearts and minds of the public only when nurses will have full powers of administration in the Public Health fields and not merely in big cities. There is great need for bringing nursing and health care to the doorsteps of the rural areas, instead of confining to the four walls of the large hospitals and big cities.

The Changing Image

Man is a social animal and he becomes a member of the society by birth. Nurses are also members of the society and they are citizens and human beings first and then nurses. Nurses, like political leaders, social leaders, religious leaders, educational leaders and administrative leaders, play an important role in the process of social change in the society. As a member of the so called noble profession, they have a good

interpersonal relationship and good communication while interacting with the individuals, families and the community as a whole. As society is a web of social relations nursing is also a web of social interpersonal relations because the nurses in this democratic social organisation are working with the people and for the people, and carrying complete health services to the community. They are working as Liaison Officers and are the links between the society and the nursing profession, as well as public administration. Therefore, all the members of the nursing profession must follow the philosophy that nurses are for the society and the society for the nurses. Broadly, we can say that nurses and the society are the two sides of one coin because nursing can not be applied in a solitary island but in the society. When this will be the attitude in the minds of the nurses the professional image of the nurses will be higher and the society will have good respect in its heart towards the nursing profession. I feel that nurses can be elected as MPs and MLAs, when they enjoy proper recognition, faith and confidence in the heart of the society applying democratic attitude in nursing administration, as present trends in Indian developments, particularly after recent elections, have shown that India is a well developed democratic country and the people love democracy.

I hope the nurses will work according to these suggestions to provide a revolutionary instrumental change to help the nursing profession for its betterment.

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DONATIONS TO TNAI

May 1977

<u>Nurses' Welfare Fund</u>		Rs. P.
Mrs. Sumitra Sharma—Australia		60-00
Subha Bhole —Dubai		200-00

General Fund

Nursing Staff, Civil Hospital Bijapur.	50-00
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June 1977

<u>Nurses' Welfare Fund</u>		Rs. P.
Miss N. Minz —Kangra		15-00
Tutors, P.H.N. & L.H.V. Students of Lady Reading Health School, Delhi (Through : Miss Hilda Christian, Nadiad).		97-00