

NURSING EDUCATION

An Experience for Leadership

By Mrs. Pansy Jain

The nursing profession in our country today is making tremendous efforts to keep pace with the growth and development in medical and allied professions. The nurse-practitioner of the 70's is required to master a complex body of knowledge and sophisticated skills in order to give comprehensive nursing care in a scientific manner to an enlightened clientele. The nursing leaders are increasingly becoming aware of the need to prepare sufficient quantity and quality of professional nurses to meet this demand.

The pioneers of nursing education in the country had the wisdom and foresight in designing a curriculum suited to the needs of the country. This resulted in establishing two Colleges of Nursing in the country more than twenty five years ago. Since the very beginning these University Colleges have been struggling hard to establish a pattern of systematic and professionalised nursing education and have earned the name for their contribution not only in India but in South East Asia as well. Quarter of a century has passed by and the concept of such a programme has not made enough headway in the country which accounts for a dearth of adequately qualified nurses even to form the faculty of but a few developing Colleges of the nursing in India.

Providing Indian girls a broad-based collegiate education in nursing at the University level was a challenge for these pioneering Colleges of Nursing. Although there was the initial problem in getting enough candidates today the trend is quite different. Even the very orthodox and well-placed families responded very favourably by sending their daughters to become nurses who have recently made a special contribution towards developing a healthier India, a nation not only free from disease and maladies but free from superstitions of various kinds. These young girls, coming from traditionally sheltered homes who joined these Colleges of Nurs-

ing in 1946, were not ignorant of the realities of their decision. The choice to become a nurse in a country where nurses were looked down upon socially, professionally and intellectually, was not considered very wise, yet many already having earned a bachelor's degree in science or humanities joined these Colleges to take up nursing as a career. It was these young students who reinforced the spirit and the zeal of the cause the institutions were committed to. These Colleges have sent out many graduate and post-graduate professional nurses who are serving in various positions of leadership, both in the institutional as well as in the community health agencies at home and abroad.

Twenty five years means a great deal to any enterprise of this kind and for the students, graduates and faculty members the period has been very rewarding. Achievements provide courage to go ahead setting newer goals and targets. Problems initiate a spirit of adventure, and failures set the intelligent mind thinking and reappraising the actions taken.

The year 1971 marked the end of a very vital period of development and the beginning of a new phase for maturity and stabilization of collegiate education for nursing profession and these Colleges have been very sensitive to the expectations of the profession for the preparation of professional leadership in nursing in our country. Experimenting with such an education programme was a vital step in order to set a pattern of education in a developing country like India and many others in this region. Nursing could no longer contend itself with mere functionary practices in the institutions providing health care to inmates or for that matter the community at large.

Much needs to be accomplished yet. It is time for graduates of the *Alma Mater* to reflect and indulge very dispassionately in the process of stock taking; raising questions and analysing the commitments they have towards the country. Just a

mere change to take place is not enough but its impact must grow in dimensions.

The graduates have a challenge to face and expectations to meet by demonstrating the worth of their preparation in various positions and work towards providing higher education in nursing to meet the present demand. The substantial knowledge of human beings, their functioning, the environment in which they live, derived from physical, biological and social and behavioural sciences in the curriculum contribute a great deal in developing competencies needed to observe objectively, elicit relevant information required, record accurately and in time, communicate meaningfully with a purpose to relate logically and emphatically, and to set priorities and attainable goals in order to meet our commitments. This is the aim of liberalising nursing education.

The two Colleges of Nursing at Vellore under the University of Madras and the College of Nursing, under the University of Delhi, set the experiment going and it is the commitment of every graduate who qualifies from her *Alma Mater* to keep working consistently as a change agent.

The demand for higher education in almost all professions is gathering momentum, and nursing as a profession can ill afford to be treated as an exception to the rule. If nursing profession desires to be placed on par with other professions in status and professional excellence, it is now that we need to replicate the University programmes in many more places in the country than has been demonstrated during the past 25 years. Upsurgence is there, much has been talked about in various professional gatherings, educational as well as administrative groups—what is needed today is action. Will the graduates in the profession take up the challenge and provide leadership in replicating the experiment? Monetary resources are important but social and intellectual resources contribute to the success of any enterprise just as much if not more. It is the social and moral responsibility of those who have received higher education in any profession to impart higher education for the development of the profession.