

MALE NURSES

By J. Baripaul

There is a dreadful dilemma in the nursing profession today where male nurses are looked down upon and discouraged both by their colleagues and the authorities. This is fully evident in the annihilation of male nurses' training from many institutions and in the gradual decline of men taking up nursing as a profession. The reason remains unexposed to the society as well as to the professionals thus leaving the male nurses in a pessimistic state of curiosity.

ORIGIN : While Florence Nightingale is the founder of modern nursing and there has been an influx of women into the profession to pick the lamp lighted by her, the services and the foundation pre-laid by her predecessors like Vincent de Paul, Thioder Flidner and other men cannot be ignored. Florence Nightingale was able to attain her nursing education from an institution that was set by Thioder Flidner. Therefore any attempt for the survival of their male descendants in the nursing profession will only be a tribute to these divine men.

TRADITION : Over the years from generation to generation women seem to claim a traditional role in the profession, a tradition in which the public think of a nurse in "SHE" term that disfavours males in the profession. If it is so why do we see so many female doctors in a society which thinks of a doctor in "HE" term?

Yet there exists a feeling that females being the "embodiment of love and service" are only suited for the profession. But history explicits men as the symbols of human love and service.

The life of Mahatama Gandhi is the gospel of human love and service. Was not Buddha deeply moved in his heart by the sight of sick, suffering and dead? Does not the noble deed of the God Samari-

tan reveal his empathy? How about the unique sacrifice of the Lord Jesus? These are not just nightmares but living truth. While it is so how could sex be the criteria to judge love and sacrifice?

BILATERAL SERVICE : Comprehensive nursing concentrates on the individual needs of patients. This being the primary objective of the institution it must accept the legitimate rights of patients to expect and experience minimum embarrassment in the nursing care offered to them. It is quite natural that a male patient likes to be nursed by a male nurse while a female patient likes to be examined by a female doctor. Although a sick person, being new to the hospital environment, may not express his/her pathos in terms of words it is up to the institution to observe his/her pathos and act accordingly. Needless to explain that some exceptional nursing cares offered by a female nurse would cause embarrassment to the patient, adding to the existing infirmity. Non-professional ward-aids as substitutes for such services would cause rigorous and unrestorable damage to the life of the patient because of the lack of professional skill and spirit of service in them. To avoid such calamities every institution must be adequately staffed with nurses of both sexes. Nevertheless it is the genuine nurse-patient relationship which aids the physician to draw facts that facilitates early diagnosis and treatment. Such relationship can easily be achieved when nursing care is imparted by the same sex.

VOCATION : Nursing needs to be recognised as a vocation and not as a career. We must also accept the fact that vocation is not the faculty of a particular sex. Therefore it is obvious that men and women should be given equal opportunities to choose nursing as

a vocation. There is need for more nurses. Nursing in its global service with expeditious developments, has its many openings where both the sexes could abide with their pragmatic field of interest like theatre technique, psychiatric nursing, ophthalmic nursing, anaesthesia in nursing, industrial nursing, military nursing, research, teaching and administration. Male nurses can be effectively utilized in the family planning programme to reach the people in the rural and remote areas where the service of female nurses are not feasible owing to the culture, climate and other surroundings. Nursing includes educating the public on the prevention of diseases and promotion of health. Individual and collective teaching in the villages can easily be organised by the male nurse. If the door is kept wide open for the really dedicated males to enter this noble profession, they will certainly prove themselves with their imbedded manual, mechanical and scientific skill mingled with love. They will also be an asset to the profession, making valuable contribution for its growth and development. This freedom of social service should not be curbed in the guise of fallacious reasons.

Division of labour by the pristine men of India on the basis of cast still remains an incurable social malady creating lot of unemployment and lack of social unity. Dividing nursing profession on sex basis will also have such adverse effects in the long run. Severing such a noble profession with an inane sex reason is no better than dissecting a cornea with a blunted scalpel. If the vocation is replaced by sex in nursing, extinction of its nobility will be the ultimate result.

Careful selection, adequate training, and examples are to be set with emphasis on the fact that nursing is a vocation and not a career. Nursing needs people who have hearts to feel, brain to conceive and hands to serve irrespective of their sex. Swami Vivekananda said, "*Give me a few men and women who are pure and selfless and I shall shake the world.*"