Believe it or Not . . . This I believe about . .

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

By Miss Alice Zachariah

BIOLOGIC and psyco-social motivations may influence behaviour as stated by Mrs. Pillai in the January issue of Nursing Journal. But may I state that spiritual values and a prompting of the spirit balance it. Any professional behaviour must be a balanced one. Let us first deal with the ideal—*Honesty*.

A nurse is *patient, honest* and *loyal.*[1] The author deals with honesty separately because she says: "It is a quality that is expected of all professional nurses." It is most important in personal relationships and in the care of patients. In her exposition of this expected ideal, the author says ; "In daily life you will find many opinions of what honesty means." Generally, it means being truthful, sincere and fair."

Honesty is expected of all the nurses but is practised only by a few. The nursing practice and image of nursing in India would have been an entirely different one if these essential ingredients of the character were practised and expressed to the last measure and grain.

There are many different ways of expressing honesty in every day behaviour.

"It is being fair in treatment of other people.
It is being accurate in our work.
It is respecting the property of others ; (and may I add national and Government property.)
It is keeping our promises,
It is using money and equipment in the way it should be used." 2

May we do a bit of retrospection and see whether the standards of our practices and behaviour measure up to these expectations.

(*a*) *It is keeping our promises. These promises need not be with reference to patients and relatives but promises made to God and self. "In the pledge, we solemnly promise to practise our profession faithfuly." Do we keep up our promises.*

(*b*) *It is respecting the property of others, of the Government, of the nation.*

How far do we exercise our integrity in the use of the property, liberty and privileges.

Take for instance the misuse of railway concession given to nurses as a special privilege. Such untruthful behaviour, even from leading members of the profession, is sickening at heart and a shame as well.

Nursing is not mere practice of a profession or an intellectual achievement or a social service. It is above all these lower levels of courses and achievements. Real nursing is an answer to the call from above. It's a life of expression of the spiritual values. It's a glow from one's heart ; a shedding forth of the light from within.

When the soul and the spiritual values are strengthened by the spiritual nurture, overcoming temptation and dishonest practices will be a natural onflow of self. Therefore, the need of the day is the spiritual nurture to be strong in spirit.

Jesus Christ said, "It's the unclean things that go in from without that harm the man and not the things that come out of the heart."

The motivation of the spirit which conforms to the realm above and which is transcendental governs all the behaviour because it uplifts the whole personality. Therefore, the need of the spiritual nurture and the expression of the spiritual values is the core of the problem to-day.

LOVE

Love and concern is the other value expected of a nurse.

"A Nurse is a person who loves
A Nurse is a person who cares."

Love is something that is more important than anything in the world. But it is not love as an emotion that we expect in the professional nurse. We expect the quality of love as a *spiritual ideal.* This is the spiritual ideal that prompts behaviour.

"To give and not to count the cost !
To serve and not to seek a reward."

There are instances where the word concern is used rather than love. But the expression of love bears wider meaning and greater depth of the ideal."

What little love and concern is expressed in the professional practice and behaviour these days ! and who wrongfully expressed or misused !

True, there are too many people—too much to do and too little time. Great pressures and demands limit the chances to nothing, for expression of love and concern.

During a recent visit to a big city hospital I could hear only complaints against nurses ; that they do no nursing care ; that they shout at and abuse the patients ; that they are not honest and so on. There was appreciation and praise for one nurse among the twenty. Nurse A is the only girl who cares, who listens and who does nursing honestly. Tell me, when this one nurse A can do an honest bit of concerned care, what's wrong with the rest of us ? It is difficult for one person to be faithful to the profession but if all join in the endeavour it would be a natural expression of the group, building up the standards. It is possible to be concerned. It is possible to be honest in our work and life.

A strong spirit and expression of spiritual ideals must be the motivating force. Do all else ; complete

all the studies of the ethics, social sciences, and advanced courses and obtain the highest degree and if you set aside the spiritual values, you go nowhere.

The Bible says :

"What shall it profit, if you gain the whole world and loose your own soul."

"What so ever you would that men should do to you, do you also even to them."

We may write volumes and volumes on ethics and professional behaviour and deduct and infer causes and effects of good or bad professional behaviour and do not practice the higher values—we shall not raise the standards of behaviour. The only solution and answer will be spiritual nurture, strength and revivial.

The promptings must come from an uplifted enlightened soul and it should begin in the leadership. There should be example and guidance. Let us not be just the red blanket matrons and supervisors. Supervisors and nurses must share the nursing practice with love, concern and conscience.

We see in practical life that a nurse who makes an attempt to do a sincere and honest job is often reprimanded without a word of encouragement and the one who does it to look "outwardly pleasing" is rewarded. Here are two aspects—right and wrong attitues of nursing and supervision. Such situations are common where many a nurse is misguided and misled and her honest aspirations thwarted.

We must have a sensitive heart says Rev. Kenneth Budd. As we grow older, most of us tend to become, "more set in our ways," perhaps even in some directions more prejudices, more unwilling to make allowances for those who are younger and seem to have some "foolish" enthusiasm. This is not, of course, the case with everyone, and some young people are indeed less tolerant and compassionate than their elders. But I am sure we have to beware of what Dean Inge once called that, "fatty degeneration of the conscience" which can mean that we become less sensitive to spiritual values as a whole as the years go on.

If we give our own ideas supreme authority we will in the end be incapable of receiving ideas from God, a supreme power on high.

Charles Darwin said towards the end of his life that he had given so much time to the study of biology that he had lost the power to appreciate music and poetry.

Sensitiveness to the spiritual teachings and to the needs of others is, I am sure, at the very heart of any genuine religion. "Love," says an American writer, most truly, "is that outreaching power of the imagination by which we know and make real to ourselves the being of others."

A priest was preparing a talk but was again and again interrupted by his son. When the son came in the third time, he gave him a puzzle which had on one side the various states of the country and on the other side, the face of a man, hoping certainly the difficult puzzle would keep him engaged for sometime.

But his son returned in no time with the puzzle correctly set. When the startled father asked how he could do it so quickly he replied : "All I had to do was to set the face of the man and the rest came into order."

The whole problem of the world is with man. The whole problem of the nursing image and status is with us, nurses. If we are faithful, loyal diligent and honest in our practice and behaviour as administrators and nurses, teachers and leaders, we can lift it up to be recognized and respected. We must review and renew our attitudes and commitments to the profession and service.

References :—1. Professional adjustments and Ethics for nurses in India by Miss Ann Zemer.
2. 'Professional adjustments' Text Book for nurses in India.

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