

in memory of florence nightingale

Reena Bose

We have assembled here today in humble submission to offer our thanks to God for the work we the nurses have been able to do with His blessing during the past year. Today is an auspicious day, for it marks the birth anniversary of the founder of Nursing, Florence Nightingale.

Born with a silver spoon Florence Nightingale was known all over the world as the "Lady with the Lamp". The mission of her life was to alleviate pain and give relief to the suffering humanity when the other young women of her age were absorbed in the gaiety of social life. She undertook the task of nursing and passed it on to the posterity. Nurses all over the world rightly commemorate this day as "International Nurses Day."

Nursing from its humble beginning in past has emerged today into a fullfledged profession based on scientific knowledge and practice. The status of nurses at present has improved with advancement of the complex nursing education programmes. The Nursing today is a scientific offering specialities in different fields like community nursing, Psychiatric nursing, nursing education, nursing service administration and so on. It is an art to be acquired with great perseverance; patience and practice. It is one of the professions which can offer a great personal satisfaction through service. Therefore, now-a-days more educated women with good academic background see in it the prospects of worthwhile career.

With advancement of medical and social sciences a nurse is today called upon to do a more complex job than simple day-to-day care of the sick. She is placed in a situation of great complexity both in hospital or in community. She is expected to be an important communicating link between the doctor, patients and their families. The

nurses role has been expanded from mere physical care to the total day to day welfare of a person and to rehabilitate them back into the family and the society.

We are aware that people always have great expectations from a nurse. We also know that society tends to blame her more readily if she does not come up to their expectation.

As I look back to my graduation day. I remember the vow that I had so sincerely taken along with my colleagues;

"I vow to Thee my Country
The service of my love
The love that asks no question
The love that stands the test
The love that never falters
The love that pays the price
The love that makes undaunted
The final sacrifice."

As the time passes, coming up against the hard realities of life superstitions and social prejudices, the vow tends to fade away. We forget that the humanitarian work of Nursing cannot be fulfilled until there is a devotion and a proper vision of life. A nurse has to see how her choice of profession fits in her total outlook of life.

As a nurse I believe that I am like a pilgrim on this earth striving to reach my eternal destination. As I go along I find others also struggling beside me struggling to reach the eternal truth. As I reach further I hear a voice calling out to me and I believe that it is God the Creator. He is asking me to help the sick and the infirm on their journey. His voice is beckoning me to put my energy and talents at the service of his needy ones.

The voice comes to a nurse in the form of—a sigh of a dying man or cry of a woman in pain or in tears of agony and grief of a family.

Hearing the call the nursing becomes more humane and tender. It strips a nurse off her harsh attitudes. When she helps a crippled man to start walking with his callipers after a long illness or helps a mother in labour to deliver her new born, she feels that though her work is hard and tiring it's worth doing.

But when she lingers close to the eyes of a dying man or removes the dead child from the trembling arms of a mother, she is convinced that the joys of this earth are transient. This realisation creates devotion in a nurse, preserves her love for all mankind and helps her not to lose the wonderful qualities that God has bestowed on her.

In the end I quote Tagore.

"Our journey is long and tedious,
Sing who are tired of spirit
Sing who are tired of heart".

(Speech delivered at St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta on International Nurses' Day by the author last year)



Miss Manjeet Kaur, a graduate of the College of Nursing, New Delhi, has recently left for Iran on an assignment with the Red Lion & Sun Society of Isfhan through the Indian Red Cross Society.