

The First 25 Years

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HAPPY Birthday to all S.N.A. members! Your 25th birthday has come in a very special year for nurses all over the world. It is the year in which the 100th birthday of modern Nursing is being celebrated. A hundred years ago Florence Nightingale set out with her little band of helpers to bring order out of chaos in those terrible wards in Scutari. A little less than a hundred years ago she wrote her *Observations* on the report of similar wards in Indian hospitals. These *Observations*, when finally published as a little red book and sent to Indian Government officials, certainly roused them from their attitude of apathy and made them very angry, but as one wrote some years latter, "it did us a lot of good".

Florence Nightingale did a true pioneer's job. In India she did it without ever entering the country and left it to the nurses of the land to carry on the hard task which she had begun. The World Health Organization fittingly chose to celebrate the 100th birthday of modern Nursing by a world consideration of the topic 'The Nurse as a Pioneer of Health'.

A Review of Work

Let us consider our organization and its work in the last quarter of this memorable century. Has the S.N.A. justified the efforts of Florence Nightingale to make nurses real pioneers of health? The work of any organization is best measured by the activity of its members and certainly the S.N.A. has added to the number of nurses qualified to go out as pioneers of health for the Secre-

tary reports: "The strength of the Trained Nurses' Association of India in 1929, the year the S.N.A. was started (and twenty-one years after the inception of the TNAI), was 476 members. In 1930 when the S.N.A. was one year old and had 128 members the T.N.A.I. had a membership of 522. In 1954 the S.N.A. membership is 4,259 and of the T.N.A.I. 2,968. So both the student and the parent organizations are growing and it seems as though the parent organization is growing faster since the inception of the student organization. This is as it should be.

However, though we now have 117 student units as compared with 3 in 1930 every student nurse is not a member of the S.N.A. which is our goal, nor is every graduate nurse a member of the T.N.A.I. Our growth should be even greater for there are some 15,000 graduate nurses in India. Here is an opportunity for student nurses to see that every student nurse is a member of the student organisation. Then to see that every S.N.A. member, when she becomes a graduate, becomes and remains a member of the T.N.A.I. and a really active member.

Meaning of Active Membership

Active membership of the S.N.A. means every student nurse is concerned with the planning of the programmes for her unit and seeing that every meeting aims at bringing a healthier state of body, mind or spirit to all who participate; social meetings where every one enjoys the fun and relaxes, discussions and debates where every member's mind is stretched and every voice heard, even if it only be to ask a humble question; demonstrations of some of the newer aspects of specialised nursing or some method of teaching the patient which you have dis-

covered to be particularly beneficial.

Good programmes can only be planned and carried out if there is good leadership and for this officers are needed and have to be elected. Does every member turn up on election night? Do the members come with their nominations ready? Does every one vote for or against or do some just have a little sleep or private conversation? After the officers have been elected, do the members back them up and help them to carry out their duties, or is everything left to the officers? These are some questions which we need to ask ourselves and we must find satisfactory answers or we cannot be satisfied that we are pioneering in our Hospital Units.

It is in the Hospital Unit that student nurses learn the meaning of active membership but soon they feel the need to meet and work with students of other units as was the case in one State Branch where the students of one unit organised a one-day conference which was attended by students from seven other units. This was the beginning and from this has come the desire for similar conferences throughout the State and students have formed a representative committee with the T.N.A.I. adviser appointed by the State Branch executive. This may be a real venture in pioneering for health if in all the plans the aim of all Nursing to bring health to the community is kept in view.

It is in her Nursing service that the student nurse gets her greatest opportunity to be a pioneer of health. There is no profession in which the student members have such unique opportunities for service and incidentally for learning by doing, as in the profession of Nursing. Do the members of S.N.A. realise the truth of this or is

The author was Assistant Professor of Nursing, Christian Medical College, Vellore in 1954. This article, written on the occasion of SNA's Silver Jubilee, is as relevant today as it was in 1954.

their clinical experience just eight or ten hours to be lived through?

Students of 1954 have help which students of 1929 never dreamed could be available. Supervisors who are teachers right on the ward to guide and help, emphasize on health teaching, personal work with patients which was hardly thought of when their Association was formed. Subjects such as health teaching, psychology and professional responsibilities and adjustments have come into the curriculum to help the student give Nursing care which will bring real health to the patient and enable the student nurse to teach the patient how to care for her own health when a return to home and work is allowed. Think what this can mean if our patients go home not only to keep well but to demonstrate health in their homes and communities? Does the writer hear a murmur? It's not like that in our wards. There are far too many patients for us to nurse them in such a manner. We don't have a ward teaching programme—our supervisors are not concerned with this sort of thing.

The Battle Goes On

If this is your reply the answer is: students, you are pioneers—the battle is not won—it is going on! You are the people who can do most to bring health to the community if your attitude to difficulties is right. You are the people who can teach the importance of cleanliness as you wash your patients. You can teach them why they need certain foods cooked in certain ways as you serve their meals or feed them. You can discuss with them how they are going to carry out what they have learned in hospital when they get home. You, if you have a really sympathetic and understanding attitude to your patients, will know more of their problems than any other member of the health team and can do more to help to find solutions to many a difficulty which if left unsolved will prevent the individual's health being maintained.

True, you cannot alone solve all problems but at least you can direct the attention of someone else

in the health team who may have just the right suggestion to make and in any case your interest will do much to help the patient to make the necessary personal effort. It is the will and the courage to be a pioneer of health in your Nursing services which is the vital need.

Student Nurses of India, it is the writer's birthday wish for you that you may receive this will and courage and be a pioneer of health in every hour of your clinical experience. Think of what will be accomplished when this wish is granted. 4,259 student nurses are pioneering for health day and night. It is you who can make this wish come true and reap the reward of personal satisfaction and good learning through service which will bring the gratitude of healthy happy members of the community no longer your patients but your fellow health workers.

The Dark Ages

In 1859 when Florence Nightingale commented on conditions in Indian hospitals she was describing the dark ages of hospitals and nursing. She writes of military hospitals: "There were no rations, no lavatories, no baths, no kitchens, no sanitary supervision and basins were 1 per 100 men. Troops would conceal their illness rather than go into hospital. Patients were washed and nursed by a ward coolie hired at Rs. 4 a month who was not a soldier and in a cholera epidemic usually ran away".

Very different is the picture which we get of hospitals and Nursing in the years 800 B.C.-1000

A.D. when historians tell us that India could hold her own in the art of healing with any country in the world. In the *Samhitas* we read of male attendants or nurses: "That person alone is fit to nurse or attend the bedside of a patient who is cool headed and pleasant in his demeanour, does not speak ill of anybody, is strong and attentive to the requirements of the sick and strictly and indefatigably follows the instructions of the physician", and again, "Knowledge of the manner in which drugs should be prepared or compounded for administration, cleverness, devotedness to the patient waited upon, and purity (both of mind and body) are the four qualities of the attending nurse." It is the wheel of King Asoka whose reign 226 years before Christ was noted for the development of hospitals and social service, which has been chosen for the flag of India.

What greater stimulation could the student nurses of India have than this symbol of the great days of Nursing embodies in the flag of their country. Pioneers—our task is to carry Nursing upward and onward past the standard of those ancient days. May the prayer that has been prayed by the devout of India down through the ages be answered in your patient's health through your faithful service.

Lead me from the unreal to the Real

Lead me from darkness to Light

Lead me from death to Immortality!"

2. *Florence Nightingale* by Cecil Woodham Smith.

3. & 3. *Sushruta-Samhita* and *Charaka-Samhita*.

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