

Role of Nurses in Family Planning

By

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(The following is the text of speech delivered by Miss C. I. Abana, Assistant Director of Health Services (Nursing), M.P. while introducing the Conference Theme: THE ROLE OF NURSES IN FAMILY PLANNING, at the TNAI Conference held in Bhopal)

OUR land influenced by its physical configuration, has peculiar and special characteristics in civilization with a variety of racial elements, wide differences of climate, soil, such as :

- the scorching heat of the deserts of Rajasthan and the plains
- the dry and rocky table lands of the Deccan
- the luxurious moist tropical regions around the sea coast as Bengal, Madras and Kerala
- the bewilderingly beautiful valleys among our hills and snowy mountains.

These give India a continental character.

This subcontinent has an area of 1.2 million square miles, with 200 spoken languages and dialects and a written history of over 5000 years.

We are an ancient people with ancient problems as well as those of the present, but the pressing alarm and controversy of today is unprecedented population growth.

The census taken each decade reveals that in 1951 the estimated population in India was 361 millions with a world population of 2,547 millions.

In 1961 the estimated population in India was 439 millions. In 1966 the estimated population in India is nearly 500 millions. In 1971 the projected population in India will be 554 millions and by 1980 projected population in India will be 700 millions with a world population of 3600 millions.

According to United Nations Population Annual for 1965 the world population increased by

180,000 a day last year to reach 3,285 millions by mid 1965, due to increased birth rate and longer life in the more developed countries.

The increase in the population growth in 30 years between 1950 and 1980, will be greater than in the entire past century or in the whole of human history.

Pandit Nehru in his observations about population problems said :

"A deficient diet, alcoholism, poor mental and physical health, neurotic conditions, affect production economically, and yet disease ridden, insufficiently fed communities as in India reproduce themselves at a prodigious rate; therefore with fertility higher among the poor, than among the rich and higher in the rural areas than in urban, this problem has specific implications."

Nurses and Doctors have the gift of a mind to be practical, pragmatic, ethical, social, altruistic and humanitarian for social betterment; humanity is our goal and social service our achievement.

Every culture having certain values attached to it are limited and conditioned by that culture. The vast majority of people do not catch up with the present day values in planned families but live according to conditions of their culture.

Great improvements can only take place if great changes take place in the mode of thought and action of the masses, with the use of all our powers of reason and understanding, all our accumulated knowledge and experience.

With scientific knowledge in human reproduction as well as the economic, social and cultural aspects of our people, we as nurses have a major role to help solve population

growth, with emphasis on poverty affecting food, clothing, housing and health of the entire family, by arousing keen enthusiasm of the individuals and groups of people to mould their behaviour, thought, feelings and habit for acceptance of Family Planning.

The best and nearest approach to our people, will be in our contact with them in the Wards, Ante natal, Post natal, Family Planning clinics and Camps by using persuasive, convincing and scientific means and methods in the course of our nursing duties, and with the co-operation of other health personnel.

The late Mrs. Margaret Sangar who had visited India was the first nurse to open the first birth control clinic in U.S.A. in October 1916, because of her belief and conviction that a controlled and directed birth rate was beneficial to the mother and the whole family—10 days later on October 26, 1916 exactly 50 years ago, she was arrested and sentenced to 30 days jail. In 1931 she received American Women's Award for integrity, vision and valour and was cited Humanist of the Year and Woman of the Century in 1965.

From the various papers to be read at this conference and from the Symposium, we will consider the cultural, religious, socio-economic aspects, the customs and modes, education, superstition and illiteracy which enable people to accept Family Planning or their reasons for resistance, and the differences in response in the two sexes. Consideration will also be given to the several methods of approach to the development of Family Planning Programme with individuals, groups and communities, and the methods

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