

WHY I CHOSE NURSING AS A PROFESSION

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TO begin with I did not choose to be a nurse, I wanted to be a musician, but circumstances drove me into it. To prove this I shall state below a few facts by which you will see that I was anything but a born nurse.

I. As a child I, like every other Orthodox Hindu, considered the nursing profession as unclean; and had an idea that all sickness came to those who were naughty, where I got this idea I cannot tell you.

II. I never went near a sick bed willingly, even to my own people if they were ill; it was a great task for me to go and see even those whom I liked.

But since I have really taken it up, I think there is no other profession in the world of which I am aware that I prefer; in fact some of my happiest times are those when I am near the sick beds helping in relieving the sufferers from their pains.

Considered Nursing as Unclean

I remember father had fever and cough when I was five years old (Presumably Influenza). The rest of the family did all they could for him, but whenever he called me,

I'd go quietly, slip out from one side, and send one of the others to him.



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School Life

Later on we children were put in the only school in Rajputana then, (Ajmere M. E. Mission). On account of famine through scarcity of water

in 1901 the corn was brought in from parts of India, England and America but with many it did not agree.

My little sister of five years old was one of those unfortunate ones who got diarrhoea. With my big sister I used to go and have a peep at her while the latter looked after her. The room she lay in was by no means an attractive room. She daily grew weaker and not long after died, this left me with greater horror of nursing than ever.

My big sister had an enlargement of axillary gland. I was 12 years old now, but as regards liking the nursing it was out of question. I went to see her occasionally in fear of the last event, but I do not remember ever doing anything for her nor touching her. One day our school principal (who was looking after her as we had no school nurse then) saw me sitting and naturally was surprised, she asked me to help her in holding the kidney tray; I looked at her in anger and after saying, "Next, you will ask me to fetch you a P-o-t," I went away.

However, at the end of that year 1908 I finished my schooling. I was too young to teach, so my elders packed me up with another girl to Clara Swain Hospital, Bareilly, for Nursing!!

Hospital Life

As we were the first ones from Rajputana, for Nursing, to encourage us the doctor-in-charge was exceedingly kind. After we were fed and dressed in nurses' uniform I noticed my colleague looked fine, and I told her so, but as for myself I said, 'Oh, I feel very uncomfortable in it and what more, the smell of the hospital is unbearable.' In a few minutes the good doctor came and took us to the operating theatre room. My colleague stood near the surgeon, and I near the anaesthetist. I do not know after how long, but when I woke I found myself on a bed. The doctor who was standing told me to lie still, and that that night I was to go on night duty. The night nurses were a jolly sort, except when they asked me to hold the light for them while they attended the patients. I never saw what they did and I doubt if they got the light in the right place. After a few weeks I went to the doctor and asked her to let me go, as I did not care for the work and was certain of never liking it, nor did I care to stay for three months' probationary period. She allowed me, but the next morning changed her mind and asked me to try for three months and then if I did not like she'd escort me to my destination. So I went under the strain not for three months but for a year. The theoretical work brought me good marks but practical O. In 1909 our old Principal came to see us, and I begged of her to take me out of that place. She and doctor both thought I was too young, so I was sent to another school for further study, (My colleague also left).

School Again

There was an epidemic of measles, some of the cases were bad. Doctor from Bareilly occasionally came and gave necessary advice. One day I asked the nurse if I was of any help for which the reply was given "Not in the least".

Turning-point of My Nursing Life

That week I had sad news of my big sister who was married three years before. She died in child birth (Post partem haemorrhage) through want of care in an out country town near Jodhpur. This was a great shock to me and it was the turning-point in my life, for it was then that I made up my mind to be a nurse; not only a nurse, but to train others and send out all over the country the nurses and midwives so that no woman would ever be without proper help (Then I had an idea that all this could be done in the twinkling of an eye).

Beginning of My Nursing Career

From that day every spare minute of my off-time I spent in helping the nurse. In the infirmary I noticed there was a little girl who was seriously ill, and she looked the image of my younger sister (who had died of dysentery); no matter what I did her looks haunted me. Nurse said, "Doctor came this morning and thinks the little girl will not live through another night".

It nearly broke my heart. I turned round to the nurse and said, "But we must not let this happen", and told her the resemblance to my younger sister. To my surprise she had been told that by the Principal. I went to the latter's office and asked her for leave from school. She knew the reason, so consented. The child's condition was worse for three days, but then the crisis turned for betterment and the same child is married, has three children now and is still called after my name.

Returned to Hospital to Complete the Nursing Course

I was glad when the doctor wrote to me at the end of that year for us both to go back and complete the Nursing Course; but my colleague preferred to get married to a handsome man, while I went for the necessary training and after graduating returned to the same school as a nurse full of enthusiasm. I spoke to the big girls on the need of nurses in the country. During the two years I was there, we had six girls go in for the training.

In 1916 I went to Naini Tal Hill for summer vacations. I was barely there for ten days when the Principal of an English School sent for me for eight days, as they had an Epidemic of Measles and needed extra help. Instead of eight days I staid there eight years; during that period my desire of encouraging the high school girls for Nursing profession grew

stronger, as it was easy to speak to them and make them realize the necessity of this noble work, and 17 girls and teachers went for the training from that High School.

Purdah Parties

I joined the purdah club to reach my Indian sisters. I was alert to make use of every opportunity. Having had experiences like that of my big sisters in their own families, they realized the necessity for our women to take up this profession.

Desire for Better Qualifications in Nursing

From that time I got a keen desire to study further, to fit myself to teach nursing to others, since I had all that India could give me, I wanted to go abroad, chance opened up most wonderfully and I succeeded in getting one of the two Scholarships offered by Lady Reading Fund.

To England

And thus in 1923 I went to England with a Mohamedan lady. After the necessary training I returned in 1927 while my colleague returned in 1925 after obtaining C. M. B. certificate only.

In England

Whenever I met my Indian sisters (for there were a number of Indian ladies studying for one thing or the other, but no one taking the line that I took) they always teased me for my profession. There I had a very good chance for convincing them of the need, usefulness and nobility of my profession, with the result that three of them took the course of Midwifery.

Returned from England

In 1927 I was appointed as one of the sisters at Simla. It was a real joy to see so many well-educated girls from respectable and comfortable homes in training. By the authorities the idea I was given was that they were going to be the future sisters of the above mentioned Hospital.

In 1928 I got a temporary post as substitute for three months, but my three months did not come to an end until 1930. There I found only one nurse for over 1,200 Indian patients while for the European Section for 200 they had 14. When I asked the reason I was told there were none to get. With great difficulty we got four trained nurses and 20 ayahs who could read and write, so the nurses and myself were able to teach them the work. Although I did not care for the mental work, I staid because I felt I was needed there.

Why did I take the Health Visitors' Course?

Although as far as nursing qualifications are concerned I had the highest and the best of training, in order to get acquainted with the ways and modes, I felt the necessity of taking the *Health Course in India*, which now I realize was the very wisest thing I could have done. It has not only increased my knowledge in many ways, but it has helped me to understand my people much better. For I know that a person not only has to know the language of those among whom she works, but also to know their modes of living and their circumstances, otherwise no one can do her best; and this I fully believe that until Indian Ladies sacrifice their pride and comfort for the country and give themselves wholeheartedly, as you find they do in other countries, Indian patients will not be getting the attention they need.

Questions to Fellow-Workers

May I ask you if you are trying your best to raise the standard of Nursing in India? Or are you always going to depend on foreigners? They have given us the good example, they have come forward and looked after our sick and suffering. Don't you think it is time we did more for the country than we are doing at present? We see every other department has improved and are aiming at the highest, and are not satisfied until they do have that.

Where do we stand? Are we satisfied with the little knowledge we have? May I turn your thoughts for a minute towards the beautiful article written by a South Indian Lady doctor in the *Indian Ladies' Home Journal* last November on Nursing?

Two Vitamins Aid in Tuberculosis

Philadelphia Physicians Explain why Vitamins A and D are useful in treatment

NEW YORK:—Vitamins A and D and fattening foods are important constituents of the diet for tuberculosis patients. Dr. Burgess Gordon and Dr. En Shui Tai of Philadelphia reported to the National Tuberculosis Association here this morning.

"It appears that a dietetic plan consisting of from 2,500 to 3,500 calories and supplemented with vitamins A and D provides a desirable food intake", they stated.

The Philadelphia scientists studied the food eaten by a large group of tuberculous patients and other patients with lung disorders. They found that vitamin A probably helps to prevent the tuberculous patient from developing other infectious diseases. A combination of vitamins A and D apparently favors the increase of body weight.

This serves to confirm the accepted practice of doctors throughout the world prescribing cod-liver oil to tubercular patients.

With the recent discovery of the extraction of the A and D vitamins in cod-liver oil, McCoy's Laboratories have offered to the world a concentrated form of these A and D vitamins in tablet form, so that now these important vitamins can be had by all tubercular patients in the summer as well as the winter.

The well-known house of McCoy's Laboratories have been the pioneers in the perfection of cod-liver oil tablets, which have helped millions of persons all over the world in putting on firm, solid flesh.