

From the Annals of History: The College of Nursing at New Delhi

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Ancient civilisations including those of India knew nursing as a science of healing and alleviation of physical suffering and as a vocation. Ayurveda classics, which survived from ancient India like Charak Samhita and Sushrut Samhita assert that there are four important aspect of medical practice – the patient, the physician, the nurse and the medicines. All four are essential to recovery and return to health. In the western world however, the ideas of goodwill, service, charity and self-sacrifice in caring for the sick could be largely attributed to the preachings of the Christian church. Until the 17th century, priest-physicians practiced both medicine and nursing although there were those who practiced only nursing too existed. After 17th century, medicine and nursing clearly bifurcated and each moved forward to meet their very different fates. Nursing and Midwifery education and services have developed to their present status mainly over the past one and half century.

Nursing Education in India: Early Years

For India, modern medicine and nursing arrived through the British East India Company. In 1664, the Council of Fort St George, Madras wrote to the agent of the East Indian Company, Sir Edwar Winter about having established a (sick home) hospital for housing the infirm British soldiers who he described were dying like dogs. This is probably the first record of institutionalised care for the sick in modern India. Those who attended the sick were not trained nurses but either fellow soldiers or domestic servants who effectuated it. An exclusive military hospital thus established was later opened to civilians. It remained a 'whites-only' hospital until 1842 when Indians were allowed in. The hospital so established was the forerunner of what is now Government General Hospital, Chennai and it was not until 1871 that the hospital undertook any scheme for the training of nurses. Madras Lying-in (maternity) hospital, now known as Government Hospital for Women & Children was founded in 1844. Both these hospitals were first to initiate formal training of nurses and midwives. Scheme for training of nurses in India was a post-Crimean war development, which gained momentum in the 1860s after Lord Napier a close confidant of Florence Nightingale became the Gover-

nor of Madras. By the early decades of the twentieth century, many nursing schools were established in the presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal. The teachers in these schools were predominantly British or North American, brought in by the British government or the Christian missions. It was these nurses with ambition and farsightedness that an association in 1908, named 'The Trained Nurses Association of India' came into being. The association started publishing its official organ, The Nursing Journal of India in 1910. In 1912, the association affiliated itself to the International Council of Nurses. By this affiliation, the, India's National Association of Nurses pledged itself to a policy of self-government and freedom from any kind of political domination.

There was a strong demand in the late 1930s for higher education of Indian Nurses to prepare them for administrative positions in Nursing Education and Hospital management. Shortage of qualified teachers plagued nursing training schools throughout the country. The facilities for advanced training were extremely limited, largely owing to financial limitations. In 1934, at their conference in Bangalore, the TNAI resolved that every branch put in effort to raise a fund of £ 250 (equivalent of £ 22,023 in 2021) towards scholarship for an Indian Nurse to pursue either of the two courses (Post Graduate course in Public Health Nursing, A Hospital Administrative course) at Bedford College, London. Apart from this there was only one other scholarship known as 'Florence Nightingale Scholarship' that enabled an Indian nurse to take either the Hospital administration or the Sister-Tutor course at the Royal College of Nursing, London.

Realising the long felt need for post-certificate courses in nursing to prepare Indian Nurses for higher posts in the profession, TNAI set up a committee in 1935 to study the situation and to work towards establishing courses of study similar to those being offered in England and North America. The committee consulted Government and university authorities for establishing an endowed school for advanced courses in nursing administration, nursing education and public health nursing. World War II, which broke out in 1939 adversely affected the progress of work. Little avenues for higher education of Indian nurses were voiced once again at the Trained Nurses Association of India conference held in Delhi in 1941 that urged the establishment of a post-graduate college of nursing in India. By 1942, owing to the World War

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II, the Government too became aware of the urgent need for having the nurses of Indian Military Nursing Service prepared in advanced area of Nursing Administration. A desperate government faced with extreme nursing shortages and unavailability of advanced trained nurses to handle the enormous task ahead, found the chief available source of expertise in TNAI, an organisation that had been pleading for higher education opportunities for nurses as early as late 1930s. Diana Hartley, General Secretary of TNAI at that time reported that during the 1940s, the Government was routinely consulting the TNAI and seeking the advice of its Nurse Leaders. In 1942, Miss EE Hutchings, Matron of Dufferin Victoria Hospital, Calcutta was appointed as Chief Nursing Superintendent (now Nursing Adviser) in the office of Director General of Health Services. This would be the first step in the direction of establishing an institutionalised voice for nursing profession in the Government, a long-standing demand of the TNAI.

Milestones in Nursing Education

On 20 April 1943, Lady Linlithgow opened the School of Nursing Administration. The School was housed in the Lady Reading Health School, along with its own staff and students. Lady Linlithgow who opened the school donated Rs. 23,400 (approximately 19 lakhs in 2021) towards a fund to provide scholarships for post graduate study in nursing. Government of India had requested the TNAI to find the Principal and lecturers for the newly found school. After much search, based on their qualification and experience, the association was able to suggest two candidates. The staff for the newly founded school comprised of Miss Margareta Craig and Miss Edith Buchanan, the Director / Principal and Assistant Director/ Vice-Principal respectively. Margareta Craig was working as a Nursing Superintendent of Walness Mission Hospital, Miraj when called to the new assignment at Delhi. Miss Craig had her Nursing studies from John Hopkins Hospital School of Nursing, Baltimore, BS degree from Wooster College Ohio and later while in service of the school, she obtained MA from Teachers College Columbia University (1946). (Mary) Edith (Mckay) Buchanan studied Basic and Public Health Nursing at University of Toronto, obtained BA from McGill University School of Nursing for graduate Nurses, Quebec, Canada and Midwifery Certificate from Lady Hardinge Hospital, New Delhi. She was working as a Sister-Tutor at Lady Hardinge Hospital Delhi when called to work at the newly founded School of Nursing Administration. Initial enrolment of the School of Nursing Administration was of twelve students comprising of six Indian Military Nursing Sisters and six Sister Tutors.

College of Nursing: How it was conceived

Government of India appointed the Health Survey

and Development Committee in 1943 under the Chairmanship of Sir Joseph William Bhore with an to survey the existing position of health conditions and health organisation in the country and to make recommendations for future development in order to improve the public health system in India. Recommendations of the Bhore committee greatly influenced the subsequent developments in Nursing Education in India. In its report of 1946, the Bhore committee explicitly recommended, "It is proposed that, as a first step, the School of Nursing Administration at Delhi – should be transformed into a College of Nursing. It is hoped that eventually the three provinces of Madras, Bombay and Bengal and the larger provinces, will similarly develop their own Nursing Colleges."

Before the publication of Bhore Committee report, on the insistence of TNAI, work was already underway since 1945 towards the development of a College of Nursing. In January 1946, a seven-member expert Committee comprising of Deans of faculties of Arts and Science, Head of the Department of English from University of Delhi, Government members representing the Ministry of Health including doctors and nurses was constituted to work on a curriculum for a course which would lead to a bachelor's degree in Nursing. Among those nurse members who contributed to formulating the curriculums were Miss Hutchings, the Chief Nursing Superintendent and members of the Trained Nurses Association of India. The Committee studied best programmes in nursing offered by universities in Canada, USA, England and Scotland. The curriculum so evolved was a degree programme of four years duration comprising of theoretical teaching up to university standard, practical nursing experience in hospital wards and other departments, including field work in Public Health and Midwifery. The committee working towards a university level degree programme in nursing found an unlikely ally in Sir Maurice Gwyer, then Vice Chancellor of University of Delhi. On 30 April 1946, University of Delhi's Executive Council passed resolution for creation of Department of Nursing under its Faculty of Science along with its existing departments of Physics, Chemistry, Anthropology, Zoology, Botany and Mathematics. The council also approved the regulations for a four-year degree programme in nursing with nomenclature BSc (Honours) Nursing. Decades later, in his message for the 25th anniversary souvenir of the college in 1971 the Chairman of University Grants Commission Dr DS Kothari noted Gwyer's vision towards the cause of nursing education in general and the College of Nursing in particular.

History was made on 25 of July 1946 when the College of Nursing New Delhi admitted 13 candidates for the BSc (Hons) Nursing Programme of University of Delhi. Along with other non-governmental

organisations like Rockefeller foundation, TNAI was at the forefront ensuring library books and teaching material and aids for the newly found college. With no other option in sight, the vacated World War II American Army barracks built around 1941-1942 was allotted for the college. The initial allotment had six and a half row of rooms, each room about 150 sq ft. Although larger rooms were available in the adjacent Censor's (of World Ward-II) block, they were not allotted to the college until July 1949. This College became the first institution to be brought into being as part of the implementation of the Bhoire committee recommendations and the first College of Nursing in South-East Asia that catered to students from India and neighbouring countries. The School of Nursing Administration too amalgamated into the College of Nursing along with the programmes it offered.

For the nurse leaders of the time, the college was a welcome change. The three years diploma programme existing at the time was in shambles as the students were used mainly for hospitals work rather than for the education that they actually came for. By starting a degree programme, Indian nurse leaders and the international experts hoped that distancing Indian Nursing from its low class and low caste roots might uplift its status. Juliette Julien of USAID said of the degree programme that 'candidates were to be recruited from higher income groups and would have the necessary educational and social background to raise the profession to a respectable and honourable status. A staff member of Rockefeller foundation's International Health Division (a nurse with public health background), Janet D Corwin was assigned in 1946 as a consultant and teaching staff. Corwin lived at the College teaching Staff quarters and functioned as a teaching staff till mid 1947. In July 1947, another Rockefeller Nurse, a Yale School of Nursing graduate Alice Forman accepted the position of Vice-Principal (Public Health Nursing) at the college of Nursing. She remained here until October 1951. Corwin and Forman were instrumental in incorporating the Public Health Nursing component in the BSc (Hons) Nursing curriculum. The College of Nursing at New Delhi was seen as a flagship development of Nursing education in the country and received a great deal of attention and resources, be it consultants, advisors, scholarships or other assistance in the form of advocacy. The college was viewed as a dream project by most international organisations that were keen on Health and Nursing. Two programmes which gave the college the initial popularity were the BSc (Hons) Nursing 4 year's degree programme and the sister-Tutor Course.

Growth of College over Years

Post-colonial India welcomed a bevy of overseas nurse experts, who were sponsored by a range of international organisations to assist in the development of

Indian Nursing. The World Health Organisation ran 22 Nursing projects between 1948 and 1958, 15 per cent of all these were in India. The Colombo Plan too provided considerable assistance throughout this period in raising the standard of nursing and nursing education. Through Colombo Plan in 1951 three Nursing experts from New Zealand were assigned to College of Nursing, namely, Miss C Clifford-Jones, Miss E-Orbell and Miss E Kent-Johnson. While they completed their tenures in 1953, another set of three Nursing experts from New Zealand joined the College of Nursing: Miss Jean Taylor, Miss Ellen Wren and Miss Ethel Jean Miles.

Emergence as Centre of Excellence

For clinical experience of the students, Lady Hardinge Hospital and Irwin Hospital (Now Lok Nayak Jayprakash Narayan Hospital) in Delhi were utilised until 1949. From then on Safdarjung Annexe Hospital became the clinical practice field. The University of Delhi, while building their zoology department laboratories included a commodious laboratory for the nursing students, and provided classroom space for lectures and laboratory work in chemistry and physics. For the purpose of providing concrete learning experience to the students in 'Rural Community Health Nursing', the College adopted Chhawla, one of the Sub-centres under Primary Health Centre, Najafgarh and developed it into a residential rural field teaching centre for nursing students. This health unit at Chhawla along with other health units at Najafgarh, Palam and Dhansa were established somewhere in 1937 under assistance from IHD division of Rockefeller Foundation. The Chhawla Health Unit when established consisted of five prefabricated cottages with a compound of its own. Students and teachers carried out rural fieldwork that covered all aspects of human life. Maternal and child health services, including domiciliary midwifery, school health programmes, and home visits. In 1951, the first batch of 4 BSc (Hons) Nursing students was awarded their degrees by University of Delhi. All four of them Miss E Gomez, Miss P Joseph, Miss S Desai, Miss M Lall were absorbed as staff members of College of Nursing.

A mobile nursing clinic, made possible largely by a contribution of from Lady Edwina Mountbatten was handed over to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in presence of Mr VK Krishna Menon, India's High Commissioner to Britain, and Arthur Blenkinsop, Parliamentary Secretary to Britain's Ministry of Health at a function held at India House, London on 14 June 1951. Lady Mountbatten who was present reportedly said, "I hope that on my next visit to your country I may see this unit in operation in the field; that will give me more happiness than anything else". Health Minister Kaur in her address said that no more fitting name could be given to the mobile clinic than "The Edwina

Mountbatten Van". In his speech High Commissioner of India noted that the foundation of the College of Nursing was the most important achievement in the field of health in India. The Edwina Mountbatten Van formed an integral part of the rural outreach programme of the College of Nursing for decades to come.

After many temporary arrangements for urban field teaching, the college finally established an urban field teaching centre at Babar Road in 1951. To start with, the centre aimed to cater to two hundred families and within a short span of around eight years, the population covered by the centre grew to around five thousand. Home visits were integral part of the learning process; bedside nursing care to sick was provided at home, the family was taught how to carry on in the absence of the nurse. Other activities included school health programme, tuberculosis nursing, venereal disease nursing and industrial nursing. Students visited families on their cycles. Domiciliary Midwifery experience was well planned and organised; the students with a member of the staff attended calls day & night for home deliveries.

On 3 March 1955, the Ministry of Health, Government of India established a Child Guidance Clinic under College of Nursing New Delhi. It was the first clinic of its kind to be established in the Government sector in the country. The clinic had a Director, a Clinical psychologist, one educational psychologist, a social worker and two Public Health Nurses. Along with clinical experience of students of College of Nursing, the child guidance clinic provided training for doctors specialising in paediatrics and students of social work. The clinic was recognised for training in child guidance to doctors who were preparing for their DCH diploma from the University of Bombay and University of London. The clinic rendered services to the Paediatrics departments of Safdarjung Hospital, Irwin Hospital (now Lok Nayak Hospital) and Kalawati Saran Children's hospital in New Delhi.

During its early years, College of Nursing enjoyed the loyal patronage of high-ranking officials notably, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur the first health minister of independent India, Lady Edwina Mountbatten Sir Maurice Gwyer and Tehmina Adranvala the first Indian Nursing Advisor to Government of India. During her tenure as Health minister, Amrit Kaur was a regular visitor to the college for interaction with the students and staff. The College of Nursing started the first Masters in Nursing programme in 1959, Master of Philosophy (M Phil) in Nursing in 1986, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Nursing in 1992 and became a designated World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborating centre for Nursing Development by 1988.

College of Nursing New Delhi lost a zealous patron with the demise of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in 1964. But destiny was to immortalise the relationship the

college shared with India's first health minister; both remain entwined for posterity as the Government of India renamed the college in 1973 as 'Rajkumari Amrit Kaur College of Nursing' after independent India's first health Minister.

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