

Beyond Nursing:Practical Spirituality

Last year in October, while at Eternal University's college of nursing at Baru Sahib, H. P., in the National Conference, the participants were honoured by the presence of University's Chancellor Babaji iqbal singh , who in his address said, "Nursing is a Spiritual Profession". We all are used to hearing "nursing is a noble profession" but someone calling it spiritual profession makes us more humble. Babaji's words got engraved in my mind and I kept on pondering over the meaning and the impact of this. And I realised, yes it is true! A nurse if she/he does not have spiritual inclination cannot be called a nurse in true sense.

Nursing is a practical profession, I am sure all will agree to this. All the knowledge a nurse acquires during her academic years or later on, every bit of it has practical value and if she/he fails to put that knowledge into practice, such knowledge has little or no use. And if nursing is a spiritual profession, as Babaji had said, I would go one step further by saying that it is "practical spirituality". Practical spirituality would mean the spirituality within you is shared by all those around you wherever you are. It is expected of nurses to empathize with the patients. To nurse means to nurture. Nurturing is possible only when a nurse uses the undivided attention in serving people under her/his care. A nurse goes beyond her routine role and responsibilities of a bedside nurse to put in life in the lives of people. And if she is successful in doing so, she/he is making use of her practical spirituality.

In nursing and healthcare, Helping, Fixing and Serving represent three different perspectives. When you help, you see life as weak! When you fix, you see life as broken! When you serve, you see life as a whole! Fixing and helping can be seen as the work of the ego, but service is the work of the soul...it is spiritual in essence. Serving people/ patients, involves spending time with them, holding their hands and talking about what is important to them, this is called "compassion". Compassion and spirituality are synonymous and the need of the hour is to have the right mix of both, in patient care.

As Ex- President of India, Sh. APJ Abdul Kalam said, "When I am transformed or my soul is unfolded, I realize that I am the agent, organ and a servant of God Almighty". Nurses, when apply spirituality in their day do- day work, their souls are unfolded and although, cure is not possible for many illnesses, these nurses become the agents of healing.

- Dr. Usha Ukande