Chapter I

Outline of the Study

The role of a nurse as an indispensable partner of the medical team, striving for the welfare of the society, demands improvement in working conditions, living conditions and status of the nursing personnel. It is a responsibility of every human being who has been born into this world and is likely to fall sick. Not only the Government but every social organisation has a debt towards this noble cause and active steps should be initiated immediately towards it. But the government must take the lead in this matter. What follows in this study, is an effort to examine thoroughly whether the Government of Maharashtra was actually providing satisfactory working and living conditions for the nursing personnel, whether there were deficiencies, if any, what the Government and the society could do to remove them.

In an employee oriented survey of the working conditions prevailing in the government hospital organizations, opinion of the employees themselves about their working conditions is very important. Therefore, it was decided to collect maximum data directly from the nurses who worked in government hospitals in Poona.
Taking into account the large number of private clinics, municipal hospitals, hospitals managed by charitable institutions and also semi-government hospitals in addition to the government hospitals in Poona, and noting the very large number of nursing staff employed there, it was decided to study the nurses in the hospitals in Poona which were fully administered and controlled by the Government of Maharashtra only. Private Clinics, semi-government hospitals, and hospitals municipal hospitals managed by charitable trusts were completely excluded from the scheme of study.

The basic information regarding the total number and the names of the government hospitals in Poona was collected from the personal interviews of the office-bearers of the nurses' unions.

Information regarding the total number of nursing staff sanctioned and employed in a particular hospital and the number of nursing personnel holding different designations like Matron, Ward Sister etc. became available from the correspondence with each hospital concerned.

A detailed questionnaire seeking information about the working and living conditions of the nurses in government hospitals was prepared for the purpose of the present study. It contained in all sixty-two minute questions. The questionnaire was divided in three parts for the purpose of
convenience. Part A contained questions answers to which would give preliminary information about the respondent. Part B was prepared with a view to collecting information about the work and working conditions of nurses in government hospitals. This part revealed the career life of a nurse. Part C aimed at collection of information about housing and home life of a nurse. The object of the present survey being the study of working conditions of nurses in government hospitals, the questionnaire concentrated on various aspects of working conditions and the remaining two parts of the questionnaire i.e. part A and C were attached only to provide supportive information. In order to get complete information regarding a particular issue, some questions were divided in number of sub-questions. For example, to judge the awareness of the nurses of the power of organised labour, existing unions and their activities, five sub-questions were set. It was decided to prepare the questionnaire in Marathi as it happened to be the mother tongue of most of the nurses in Poona or at least they knew it by usage. Most of the nurses coming from the lower middle class families and having limited basic qualifications as S.S.C., did not have enough knowledge of English. Some of the members of the nursing community who were consulted in this respect frankly disclosed their fear for this foreign language. They told that they could respond in a better way if the questionnaire would be drafted
in a language familiar to them. The questionnaire used for interviewing nurses holding different designations was kept uniform for the purpose of comparison. In the questionnaire, questions which had a bearing on the nurses' life history were asked because such questions could throw light on their attitude towards present-day problems. For example, one of the respondents, when asked why she came to Poona, answered that she was divorced and she was compelled to come to Poona to find a job as she had nobody to support her. It was obvious that she had no complaints about long and inconvenient duty hours or insufficient pay. In general, attempt was made to get complete life sketch of a nurse working in a government hospital in Poona, by asking questions about both the every-day work life as well as home life of a nurse.

A statement containing the purpose of the research was attached to the questionnaire. This could make the nurses aware of the importance of the work involved and make them answer fully and accurately. A copy of the questionnaire is given in the appendix of this chapter.

As the field of the survey was too large to be covered by a single individual worker, the sampling method had to be adopted. The sample of individual nurses was randomly selected from the lists of all nursing staff received from the government hospitals in Poona. The total
nursing staff in government hospitals in Poona was 1165 in 1977-1978 and in the sample 92 nurses were selected. The nursing staff in the sample formed about 12% of the total nursing staff in government hospitals in Poona. In the sample, there were 2 Tutors, 24 Sisters, 4 Psychiatric Nurses, 4 Paediatric Nurses and 58 Staff Nurses, who formed about 2.17%, 26.09%, 4.35%, 4.35% and 63.04%, respectively, of the sample. While calculating the sample, the Student Nurses were not included in total population. The reason was that though the student nurses regularly had a practical training in the wards and worked there for hours, they were students and not regular employees. So they could not be taken into account as Maharashtra Government employees. Even though the student nurses did not form a part of the total population, a few student nurses were personally interviewed to know their view-point as regards the present working conditions of nurses.

It must be noted here that the problem of drawing a sample was seemingly a simple job but there were difficulties in the actual procedure. The statistical material needed for this purpose did exist, but getting access to this existing official data was not easy. Red tapeism in the administration of hospitals was an obstacle. The administration did not respond to recurring letters urging to supply the necessary data. The data was made
available only after the officers concerned were convinced regarding the necessity of collecting that data and persuaded to do so. The officers did not know whether they had an authority to supply such information to an outsider, therefore, a typed letter to that effect was sent to them so that it could be sanctioned. So the data became available after an unduly long interval of time. This happened in respect of collection of data from all the government hospitals in Poona.

The selected nurses were contacted personally/through other sources and the questionnaires were issued to them. The questionnaires filled by the sampled respondents provided live and almost reliable data regarding the working and living conditions of the government nurses in Poona. Generally all the nurses in the sample were responsive and co-operative. It was found that in order to secure excellent response from the nurses in the sample, it was advisable to approach the nurses through their union-leaders. The union-leaders had a good hold over the members. They explained to them what the research was for and appealed to them to give full co-operation in the interests of the society as well as of the nursing community. Most of the respondents answered the questions fully but some of them avoided to answer questions about age, abortions, indebtedness of the family etc. as perhaps they found these questions personal or
rather insulting. Some questions like questions on the issue of participation in management were not answered or answered incorrectly because of ignorance. On the whole, the respondents had a good understanding of their problems and knew how to express their grievances.

To collect maximum information about different problems in the life and labour of nursing personnel from the nursing personnel, a method of group discussion could be very useful. Therefore, a seminar of the sampled nurses was conducted in the Institute of Management Development and Research, Poona, on 19th March, 1978. The seminar was largely attended by nurses working in all the government hospitals in Poona. Representatives of the nurses working in Bombay and rural Maharashtra Government hospitals and the office-bearers of the nurses' unions and associations were also present. In all sixty participants were there who discussed their experiences, problems, attitudes, aspirations, likes, dislikes and demands openly and freely. The seminar was conducted in two sessions. In the first session, some social workers and experts spoke on different issues regarding the nursing profession. In the second session, participants discussed economic and social problems faced by their community and tried to find out best possible solutions to them. The discussions were very interesting and thought-provoking. Detailed notes of these discussions were taken which proved to be very useful.
In addition to the questionnaires, office-bearers of the nurses' unions and some senior and devoted nurses were personally interviewed. Both the nurses' unions actively working in government hospitals in Poona were very co-operative. Inspired by the cause of improving the life and labour of their fellow nurses, the union leaders and other senior nurses were a treasure of information. Discussions with them on different issues connected with their working conditions gave a better insight into their problems. Any opinion or information which was given by them was treated as strictly confidential. The duty hours of the nurses being not normal office duty hours, these nurses were contacted according to their convenience. The nurses' homes were scattered in different localities and sometimes it was not easy to find some of them.

The nurses' unions and associations regularly conducted meetings of their members to carry out their work and, in these meetings, free discussion took place on various policy matters of the unions and associations. An opportunity of attending these meetings was given to me and proved to be most useful to me to get deeper insight into their problems.

All the government hospitals in Poona were personally visited on different occasions. Some of the functions of the nursing staff which took place in these hospitals were
attended. The visits to the hospitals exposed the real circumstances that existed in the hospitals. This facilitated the checking of the reliability of responses in the questionnaire and justification for the opinions expressed in the personal interviews regarding working conditions.

After the collection of the data was complete, the data were arranged in a tabular form for further analysis. As the number of questionnaires was not very large, it was decided not to formulate precise categories of answers beforehand and then to sort out questionnaires according to the nature of answers in them. Instead each answer to a question was read and then a separate category was formed for each independent answer. After dealing with first ten or fifteen questionnaires, replies in the remaining questionnaires could be easily sorted in the categories set according to those first ten or fifteen questionnaires. This system enabled taking note of each and every independent answer which had some sort of special or additional information to be supplied for the present study.

One of the major difficulties was to get the basic references necessary for the purpose of information and comparison. A report of the committee appointed by the Maharashtra Government to go into the question of improvement in the nursing education and nursing services, popularly known
as the Mohite Committee Report, was a basic document necessary for getting acquainted with the present situation in Government hospitals in Maharashtra and the practical suggestions made for improvement. The report represented future government policy regarding the nursing personnel. It could be used for comparison as well as critical appreciation. All the government authorities, from whom Maharashtra Government Publications could be obtained, were contacted several times and efforts were made to convince them about the necessity of getting the report but the report was not for sale and not a single copy could be made available. The report was actually printed in several copies in the year 1976, yet until 1978, it was waiting for approval and acceptance by the Government of Maharashtra and was kept away from public view. With great efforts a single copy was made available only for a few days from the library of the Sassoon General Hospital. Many months were lost in getting this important reference book.

The ideal employment and work conditions of nursing personnel agreed by the International Labour Office's General Conference in 1977, which represented international trend of opinion in this respect, were made available from the ILO publications and they were studied together with the data received from the sampled nurses and the recommendations of the Mohite Committee appointed by Government of Maharashtra.
The rules and regulations made by the Government of Maharashtra and the procedures traditionally fixed regarding the working conditions of nurses in Government hospitals in Maharashtra were also studied. It must be noted here that standard rules regarding the working conditions of the nurse-employees existed but they could not be found collectively in any official manual - not even in Hospital Administration Manual. Systematic list of standing orders about the nursing staff had to be prepared from the official data widely scattered in various documents containing orders and resolutions issued by the Government.

The present study has been divided into eight chapters.

Chapter two describes nursing as a profession. It gives the growth and importance of the nursing profession from the point of view of humanity and as a source of employment in today's atomic age. It describes general conditions and peculiarities of the profession. It also describes general conditions of the profession in Maharashtra with its historical background. It also provides information about International Labour Organisation's contribution towards improvement in working conditions of the nursing personnel. The Government of Maharashtra also has contributed its efforts to this cause by appointing a special
committee and the reader can find the information about it in this chapter. The reader can also find the rules and procedures of the Government of Maharashtra regarding recruitment, appointment, training, promotion, transfer, duties and responsibilities, job rotation and retirement of the nurses.

Chapter three contains an analysis of the composition of the nursing personnel in government hospitals in Poona. It draws a general picture of the sampled nursing personnel giving particulars regarding age, caste, marital status, education etc. of the sampled nurses.

Chapter four and five form a core part of the study. They describe the working conditions of the government nurses in Poona as revealed by the questionnaire and interviews. They fully deal with different aspects of working conditions such as working hours, supervision, pay and allowances, leave, amenities at the place of work, load of work, performance appraisal, etc. They also describe trade union activities. They study in detail the entire work-life of a nurse from the point of view of the management science. They pin-point the determinants of job satisfaction and study the effect of each aspect of the working conditions on the total job satisfaction of a nurse. They study the working conditions of the Government nurses from physical as well as psychological point of view.
Chapter six deals with the living conditions of the nursing personnel in government hospitals in Poona. It gives general idea about the families of nurses and furnishes information regarding family type, size, age group and educational status of members, income of the family etc. Information about the type of accommodation, facilities regarding bath-rooms, water taps and latrines etc. give complete idea regarding their housing. The chapter also describes how a nurse spends her free time and whether and how she can make her life comfortable by using the income that she earned.

Chapter seven studies the efforts made for the improvement of nursing services and nursing education in the State of Maharashtra with reference to the Report of the Vanamala Mohite Committee, appointed by the Government of Maharashtra. It presents the salient features, suggestions and recommendations made by the Committee and discusses the fairness of the recommendations and the possibility of their implementation.

Chapter eight gives summary, conclusions and some practical suggestions for the betterment of the nursing personnel.

----x----