



## EDITORIAL: **THE HINDU**

**GENERAL STUDIES 4: ETHICS**

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**TOPIC: ETHICS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**The yearly 'thank you' to nurses is not enough**

### 1. Context and Critique

- The editorial coincides with **International Nurses Day**, drawing attention to the **discrepancy between symbolic appreciation and real empowerment** of nurses in India.
- While nurses are praised for their service, **structural reforms and systemic support remain lacking**, especially in leadership roles, professional recognition, and career growth.

### 2. Role of Nurses in India's Healthcare System

- **Nurses constitute around 47%** of India's total health workforce, making them a **crucial pillar** of service delivery in both urban and rural settings.
- Despite this numerical strength, they remain **underrepresented in policy decisions, institutional leadership, and governance roles**.
- Their roles are often perceived as **subordinate to doctors**, affecting their clinical autonomy and decision-making authority.

### 3. Nurse Practitioner (NP) Programs in India

- India has initiated advanced training programs like:
  - **Nurse Practitioner in Midwifery (NPM).**
  - **Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care (NPCC).**
- These aim to enhance nurses' clinical expertise and allow them to take on **expanded roles in patient care**.
- However, the **implementation has been slow and scattered**, primarily due to:
  - **Absence of legal clarity** on their scope of practice.
  - **Undefined career pathways and uncertain licensing mechanisms.**
  - **Inadequate regulatory protection** and framework to legitimize NP roles.

### 4. Policy Gaps and Structural Resistance

- **India lacks a unified, national-level licensing and accreditation system** for Nurse Practitioners and other specialized nursing roles.



- Specialized nursing roles like **diabetes educators, stroke nurses, and palliative care nurses** are **not officially recognized**, limiting their career growth and contributions.
- Resistance from **certain sections of the medical fraternity**, particularly physicians, reflects **patriarchal mindsets and rigid hierarchical biases** in healthcare.
- These social and institutional norms **prevent nurses from gaining authority and recognition** proportional to their capabilities.

## 5. Global Best Practices and Models

- Countries like:
  - **Australia and the United States** have **legalized Nurse Practitioner roles**, allowing them to prescribe medicines, manage clinics, and lead care teams.
  - **Thailand and South Africa** promote **community health models** led by nurses, which have shown **improved health outcomes and cost-effectiveness**.
- These models demonstrate that **nurse-led care is efficient, accessible, and patient-satisfactory**, especially in underserved areas.

## 6. Way Forward: Reform Measures for India

- **Legal Recognition and Regulation:**
  - Urgently establish a **clear legal and regulatory framework** for Nurse Practitioners.
  - Define **scope of practice, licensure protocols, and professional protections** to legitimize their roles.
- **Reform Nursing Education:**
  - **Close substandard nursing colleges** that compromise training quality.
  - Introduce **standardized curricula and training protocols** across institutions.
  - Promote **clinical exposure, research opportunities, and digital skills** in nursing education.
- **Empower Nurses as Leaders:**
  - Create **leadership development programs, mentorship opportunities, and nurse representation in policy bodies**.
  - Encourage **nurses' participation in hospital management and public health decision-making**.
- **Gender Equity in Health Systems:**



- Address **patriarchal norms and hierarchical power structures** in healthcare institutions.
- Promote **gender-sensitive workplace reforms** that provide nurses with professional dignity, safety, and equitable pay.
- **Support for Nurse-led Reforms:**
  - Encourage models where **nurses independently manage community clinics**, particularly in primary care and rural settings.
  - Provide institutional and financial support to **scale nurse-led innovations**.

## 7. Conclusion

- Nurses are the **backbone of healthcare systems**, yet they remain marginalized in India's health policy framework.
- Recognizing their contribution requires more than symbolic gestures — it demands **legal empowerment, professional development, and leadership roles**.
- Structural reforms can not only **elevate the status of nurses**, but also **enhance healthcare delivery, efficiency, and equity** across India.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-yearly-thank-you-to-nurses-is-not-enough/article69580421.ece>