



MATRON C N JANAKI
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE OF CHENNAI

Often times when one mentions healthcare, the images that come to our minds are those of clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, ambulances and doctors. Rarely do our minds focus on the nursing community. Silent and working almost behind the scenes, nurses are literally the backbone of the health care industry. Behind every successful surgery, convalescence, recovery, emergency care, home health care, trauma care and outpatient care is a team of nurses. One cannot imagine a hospital or clinic sans nurses. Yet, these are the very people who take the brunt of patients' ire and frustrations with a smile; offer their shoulders for patients and wards to cry out their souls while masking their own sorrows; feel guilty when a patient succumbs; get elated when patients survive and give their everything in an emergency.

**SAVE ONE LIFE YOU'RE A HERO,
SAVE ONE HUNDRED LIVES
AND YOU'RE A NURSE. THIS QUOTE
APTLY SUMS UP THE IMPORTANCE
OF BEING A NURSE.**

Coimbatore Narayanan Janaki (C.N. Janaki), all of 5 ft and aged 75 is a nurse – committed, gentle, caring, and yet proud and passionate. True to this quote, Janaki has helped countless patients in their fight against the dreaded disease called 'cancer'.

Nursing has been her only training, passion, job, responsibility and commitment in all her 56 years of working life.

Sister Janaki was born on 26th January, 1941. But, soon after, tragedy struck when within 6 months of her birth she lost both her parents. Her grandmother and her elder brother looked after Janaki till she was 12 years old. In 1953, she was admitted into Avvai Home, a school for girls from the poorer sections of society where she completed her schooling in 1959.

Immediately after her schooling she joined the Cancer Institute as a nursing assistant.



There she realized that nursing was her true calling. Soon, the late Dr. S. Krishnamurthi and the present Chairperson Dr. Shantha noticed her commitment to her job and encouraged her to undergo formal training in nursing. Between 1961 & 1964, Janaki underwent General Sick Nursing Training at the Government Stanley Hospital. Post-training she returned to Cancer Institute and was posted as Staff Nurse.

**APPREHENSION, UNCERTAINTY,
WAITING, EXPECTATION, FEAR
OF SURPRISE, DO A PATIENT MORE
HARM THAN ANY EXERTION. -
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE**

As a nurse Sister Janaki's work was primarily to look after the well-being of the patients under her care. In doing so she had to work with doctors and her nursing colleagues

*Nursing has been her only training,
passion, job, responsibility and commitment
in all her 56 years of working life*

to ensure that there was no inconvenience to the patients. The keen observer that she is, Sister Janaki realized that patients needed empathy and understanding of their difficulties. Says Janaki 'Patients are always



anxious to know what is wrong with them and when they will become ok. It is thus our (nurses) responsibility to calm them, give them hope and encourage them to fight their disease. Her pleasant demeanour and caring ways worked wonders in reducing the stress and worries of her patients. Caring for thousands of patients, day in and day out, she developed a great commitment for her patients and her job.

She believed it to be her divine purpose. So much was her commitment to her profession that she chose to remain single her entire life.

**IT IS NOT HOW MUCH YOU DO,
BUT HOW MUCH LOVE YOU PUT
IN THE DOING - MOTHER TERESA**

In 1975 she was promoted as nursing

*In 2009, after a long service of over 40 years,
Janaki retired from service.
But that was just for the records.
She continues to be part-time matron
with lesser work hours in deference to her age*

supervisor and continued in that position for 28 years.

In a hospital which has thousands of patients and hundreds of nursing staff, the job of a Nursing Supervisor is of great importance. In addition to patient care, Janaki was in charge of assigning nurses their duties for each shift, well-being of the nurses and other ward staff, supporting doctors in treating the patients. Janaki went about her responsibilities with great aplomb earning the respect of doctors, her nursing colleagues, management and above all the patients and their wards.

In 2004, Janaki was promoted yet again as Matron.

As matron she was in-charge of assigning shift and ward duties to every nurse in the hospital. She was also charged with the responsibility of looking after the welfare of all the support staff in the hospital. With almost consummate passion Janaki did her job with her characteristic efficiency and care.

In 2009, after a long service of over 40 years, Janaki retired from service. But that was just for the records. She continues to be part-time matron with lesser work hours in deference to her age. Even the lesser hours start at 6 AM and ends at 2 PM. She lives in the hospital campus and one can find her moving briskly around the hospital premises at odd hours checking on everything.

Meeting her is refreshing in an otherwise somber environment and we cannot but feel some of her energy and enthusiasm rubbing on to us. Diminutive and proud of her job, Sister Janaki stands tall as a beacon of light in a sea of darkness, our own Florence Nightingale, a role model and a true Champion of Chennai.

The world is a better place, thanks to Sister Janaki.