

## THE ADVANTAGE OF HEALTH VISITORS IN RURAL AREAS SPENDING WHOLE DAYS OUT IN THE VILLAGES

*By PRIYA GANGULI*

I am a student of the Sir John Anderson Health School in Calcutta. Rural work is part of our training life, so for this we were sent to Singur, a village 21 miles from Calcutta, for a month after the Puja Holidays. There is a Child Welfare centre at Singur, in which two Health Visitors are working, and we found it a very interesting part of our training.

The visiting of the mothers and infants in their homes is the point of the Health Visitor's duties which should be the beginning of her activities. She must understand the home conditions, and social and economic conditions, also the nature of the people and the factors which hinder her work. Home visiting brings her into touch with women who cannot, or will not, bring their babies to the centre for advice and who need the help and teaching which the Health Visitor can give in the interests of health. The visiting should be systematic. But the Health Visitor cannot devote much time in each case. If the area is big, she has to do at least twenty or thirty visits a day and, specially in Singur village, where the houses are very far from the centre, the coming and going alone takes a long time.

If the Health Visitor could spend her whole time in visiting, she would be able to pay a larger number of visits, but she has to carry on many other activities, therefore it is only possible once or twice a week, although it is very essential and helpful, specially in a village.

I like working in the villages very much, because in many ways it is very convenient for visiting. Firstly it saves time which gives the Health Visitor the opportunity to study the nature of the people and their social, economic and psychological conditions. Then it helps in teaching, because the people do not like so much to listen alone but prefer to listen in groups. Another advantage is that it is very convenient for propaganda work and to meet with Fathers' Classes, because fathers go out morning and evening for work, but stay at home during the midday for meals, so we get a chance to meet them in the midday. As fathers are the head of the family, mothers cannot do anything without asking them, therefore it is better to advise the fathers first about the Welfare Centre, and we can explain to them nicely what good results will be obtained if they follow our advice and attend it regularly. Then they will allow their wives to follow our advice and attend the centre. We can make friends with the people after long talks with them, and if we can spend some time with them they themselves become very friendly, too. We also have greater opportunities of finding out what kind of diet they live on.

When I was in Singur, I went to Mamudpur for a whole day's visiting with the Health Visitor, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. It