Editorial:

***Changing socioeconomic scenario in India and scales off assessment* Gadadhar**

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Several methods or scales have been proposed for classifying different population by socio economic status. They have considered many variables. However social transformations and fast growing economy have rendered these scales ineffective in measuring SES at present. (13) The important land marks in poverty elimination took place in 21st century. The new poverty line in India was redefined with percapita expenditure of Rs.32/- for villages and Rs. 47/- in cities by an expert panel headed by RBI Governor in 2014 and calculated 29.5% of population to be below the poverty line. Hence the modified GB Prasad scale is adequate for the rural population but not applicable to cities under this consideration.

Food subsidy especially after food security Bill which promises essential food grains at cheaper rate to people of low income category ensures access to food for those who cannot afford for basic needs of calorie and protein.

The national Rural Employment guarantee Act of 2005 ensures right to work for everybody. 100 days of guaranteed work and wages in a financial year raises the illiterate, unskilled worker to upper lower class in Kuppuswamy scale. The average literacy rate in 1971 was 34.35 and gone up to 74.04 in 2011 which is increasing steadily and is not parallel to the economic development hence there is disparity between education and socio economic advantage.

The proposed classification

Considering all the above variables a different scale for socio economic status is deemed necessary. Two classes have been well defined by the Government for welfare work. Those who cannot look after the basic food need of the family are classified under below the poverty line and it does not account for other essentials such as health care and education. (14). It can be also calculated taking the basic calorie need of 2400 k Cal/day with cereal to pulse ratio of 5:1 to provide enough protein for growth. For dietary fibres the ratio proposed is 2:1. However for sake of calculation 4:1 can be a standard formula. With 475 gms of cereal, 125 gms of pulses, the market cost can be calculated. Addition of 30% to the above for cooking, oil and salt, vegetables will indicate the daily per capita need which added with the minimum expenditure in housing and cloths will take another 30%.

Roughly 70% is to be added to the basic expenditure for calorie which is dependent upon the prevailing market variables. For cities 30% as city compensating allowance has to be added to reach the per capita income below which one can be taken as poor. Otherwise any family who receives subsidies from the Government are to be rated as poor. The upper class will be those who pay for the welfare of the country. In other words those paying income tax are in this category. Though their number is small (around 1%) now, it is expected to grow up as more and more people will pay for the country's development.

The middle class are the back bone of the nation. But they do not pay direct tax for national welfare. This class can be subdivided into 3 categories with the variables of Health, Education and Luxury.

Lower middle class – this class will have families who can look after their food need but not the health and education need. They depend upon the government schools (free schools) for the education of their children or Government support for the same. For health need they utilise the Government free hospitals.

Average Middle class – The families who can look after their health need with direct payment or through insurance. The children of the family go to the pay schools for education.

Upper middle class – Apart from looking after their health and education they do have luxury items like four wheelers, laptops and Air conditioners in their house. But they do not pay income tax, they might be giving tax returns.

Table: 4 Proposed socio economic status classifications

Lower class	BPL, Gets subsidies for family maintenance.
Lower Middle class	Can look after food need but not Health and Education.
Average Middle class	Can look after the Health and Education. But cannot spent for Luxury.
Upper Middle class	Apart from looking after Health and Education they have Luxury items in the family. May or may not be giving tax return.
Upper class	Paying Income tax to the Government.

Cycles, Motor cycles, Television is not to be considered as luxury items as they are now a social need for the families. Cars or three wheelers possessed for professional use will not be included as luxury items for the family. With efflux of time like TV and motor cycles some of the luxury items may be accepted as a bare family need.

The above consideration shows the widely used Kuppuswamy's scale and GB Prasad's scale are not very much utilisable for the present scenario. The implication of CPI makes both more complex. Due to regular inflation, dependence upon income may not give accurate information always. It is also not easy to remember them at bed side. Therefore an income independent classification will be more suitable for clinicians which will be both urban and rural friendly.

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