

A NOTE ON CHANGING FAMILY EXPENDITURE IN CALCUTTA DURING 1939-56

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1. *Introduction*

It is interesting to study the relationship between the consumption expenditure of a particular item and the total consumption expenditure, of a group of people for any point of time. A comparison of such relationship for the same group of people at different points of time is even more interesting — especially so when the intervening periods between such points of time are scenes of important social and economic changes. In the present note an attempt has been made to make such a study in respect of a section of population of the city of Calcutta. The section of population considered here corresponds to the lower-middle expenditure group whose maximum family expenditure per month varies between Rs. 600 and Rs. 700. The points of time which have been considered are the years 1939, 1945, 1950-51 and 1955-56. Needless to say, the intervening periods between these years are important in many ways. The year 1939 refers to the pre-war period; in 1945 the 2nd world war came to an end; in 1950-51 was initiated the 1st five-year plan of independent India while in 1955-56 the first plan came to an end and the more ambitious 2nd five-year plan started.

2. *The data and the underlying assumptions*

The data for the years 1939 and 1945 — based on the information gathered in course of the family budget surveys conducted by the Indian Statistical Institute in these two years — have been obtained from S. Bhattacharya's paper in *Sankhya*, Vol. 8, part 2. The data for 1950-51 and 1955-56 have been obtained from the reports on family budget enquiries undertaken by the State Statistical Bureau, Government of West Bengal

From Bhattacharya's paper information has been gathered in respect of a section of population, socially known as the middle-class, and having per family monthly expenditure range Re. 0 — Rs. 600. On the other hand, the data obtained from the reports of the State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal, relate to the population of the general holdings of Calcutta having expenditure range Re. 1 — Rs. 700. The groups of people considered in the two sets of data are not,