Chapter 7

Conclusion

We have reviewed in different chapters I. P. Desai’s contributions to various fields in sociology. In this chapter we shall try to take an overall view of his life and work. If we review the whole life of I. P. Desai we find two major phases: formative phase and productive phase.

The Formative Phase of I. P. Desai

The formative phase of I. P. Desai’s life covered mainly his early upbringing in the village and later his educational career. Unfortunately there is not much documentary evidence about this phase. We have to depend on bits and pieces of information from here and there. I. P. Desai spent his childhood in village Parujan, his ancestral place. Then he stayed at Surat to complete his high school education. Thus I. P. Desai had roots in rural society, which also included his caste society. In Surat he stayed in his caste hostel where he was influenced by a freedom fighter Dayalji Desai who belonged to his caste. His roots in his native village are evident in his research on the patterns of migration in Parujan village. It was published under the title, *The Patterns of Migration and Occupation in a South Gujarat Village* (1964b). His rootedness in his village and concern for his caste is visible in the following statement: “During vacations I used to go to my village, and each time I observed the differences compared to the village of my
youth. The most striking thing was the number of closed houses and presence of tenants in some houses. The houses closed were those of the highest caste in the village -- Anavil Brahmins -- referred to as Desais in popular parlance. During my student days the village was very lively, particularly the Desai locality, which I primarily identified as my 'village'. We always went to the village as soon as the school or the college was closed. Those working in Bombay would manage to get leave during the college vacations. We, about 20 young men, used to gather from the morning under the banyan tree. As the time passed, this scene disappeared although the number of graduates, matriculates and the high school and college students was much higher now than before. How did it happen?”

(1981c: 37-38). This statement provides the background in which he undertook the study of migration. He examined people at two ends: the place from which they migrate and the place to which they migrate. He examined the rate of migration with reference to time and place. This was the quantitative aspect of migration. He also studied qualitative aspect of migration, by studying the age, sex, education, occupation and social status of the migrants. He examined four questions related to migration: who migrated, when he migrated, where he migrated, why he migrated, and whether he returned to village or not?

For higher education Desai had gone to Bombay. There he studied for B.A. at Wilson College. He studied for M.A. at the School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay and completed his Ph.D. there in 1942. Thus, he completed his higher education at Bombay and acquired knowledge. This was the formative phase of I.P. Desai's academic life. Here he was influenced by the ideas of his teachers G. S. Ghurye and N. S. Thoothi. His Ph.D. thesis was entitled “Social Bases of Crime”, which was based on library work. After completing his Ph.D. he worked as Research Assistant.
to Ghurye and thus acquired his first experience of fieldwork in sociology. During this phase he did not publish anything, but his academic foundation was laid here. He was asked to collect caste-wise data on fasts, feasts and festivals from Bihar and Orissa. There was no sampling of castes or individuals and no schedule. Any one who was responsive could be the respondent. The data was collected through unstructured interviews, success of which depended on the probing skill of the interviewer. Desai liked that method of data collection and wrote about it, “That method of collecting information is still my favourite, though of course with some modifications” (1981c: 24). However, he did not mention what modifications he would have made. He did not publish anything on the data he collected in Bihar and Orissa. This work was only a part of his training as a fieldworker.

Besides the training in sociology under Ghurye at Bombay University, a major abiding intellectual influence on I. P. Desai was that of Marxist or radical thought. He participated in the independence movement with biradar (i.e., comrade) Dinkar Desai, an active member of the Communist Party of India. He wrote in a note, “From 1930 to 1932 I was an active political worker” (1981c: 53, Note 2). He also mentioned about his belief in Marxism in the following words, “I feel committed to the direction given by Marx” (1984a: 645). This ideological influence was also reflected in his concern for the poor and the underprivileged, such as the villagers, untouchables, and tribals, and therefore, he studied their social movements.
The Productive Phase of I. P. Desai

This phase was spent in four institutions of higher education, which required a combination of teaching and research: Samaldas College in Bhavnagar, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute in Poona, the M. S. University of Baroda, and Centre for Social Studies, Surat. He taught different classes at these places; however, he was always attracted towards doing research.

Bhavnagar: The first part of Productive Phase

From November 1945 to 1951, I. P. Desai taught at Samaldas College, Bhavnagar, and became the first teacher of Sociology in Gujarat. Here he taught B.A. classes. This was the first part of the productive phase of his academic life. He worked at Samaldas College for six years. During this phase, he did not publish anything academically significant. However, he did develop interest in the study of tribes. Here he realized the limitations of his training. He wanted to study the tribe of Padhars but he realised that he lacked adequate training to undertake an independent research.

Poona: The second part of Productive Phase

In 1951 Desai joined the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute at Poona. This was the second part of his academic life. He taught M.A. classes at Poona. In Poona, his teaching load was light because that Institute was primarily a research centre. He was interested to study the problems of college students at Poona but did not succeed in this project. During this part, he successfully completed his first research on
the high school students in Poona. During this phase he experienced success as well as failure in research. Though he worked for a short time at Poona, he achieved more academically. It seems that the academic environment prevalent in Poona, and congenial relations with colleagues, provided motivation to undertake research. Thus, his first empirical research was completed after nine years of his library research for Ph.D. Significantly, this research was based on the questionnaire method, for which Desai cultivated a strong preference throughout his life. The inculcation of scientific attitude made him to evaluate his own research work. He objectively evaluated his work on high school students in Poona, and pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of his study.

Baroda: The third part of Productive Phase

The third part of his academic life began in August 1952 when he joined the Department of Sociology at the M. S. University of Baroda. He taught B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. students here. He stayed in Baroda from August 1952 to 1966. This long phase of fourteen years in his academic life was very important for his academic development. As a matter of fact, this phase was very fruitful and significant in terms of his academic achievement. He began to publish his writings after coming to Baroda. He published his first paper, “Sociology Comes of Age in India” in 1952. Thereafter, he has fourteen publications to his credit during this phase. He wrote a paper based on his Ph.D. research, entitled “Crime, Primitive Law and Some Social Anthropologists” (1954a), i.e., after twelve years of completion of his research. He also published three important books in the fields of education, family, and migration respectively (Desai 1953, 1964a, 1964b). While in Baroda he wrote and published his first book on high school students in Poona.
It can be said that after leaving Poona, he was confident to undertake an independent research project. Therefore, he undertook a major research project on family in Mahuva. In this study, he not only followed all principles of scientific research but also arrived at new significant conclusions about the family. He rigorously examined the issues related to the definition of jointness of joint family, and the future of joint family in India. He wrote and published another important book, *The Patterns of Migration and Occupation in a South Gujarat Village* (1964b). He used a novel method in the study of migration, and pioneered this field of study. He arrived at a new explanation of migration, and established the relationship between migration and social structure of Parujan. Thus, this was the beginning of his academic writing and he established himself in various fields of sociology by his independent contributions. Here, he became an expert researcher and a distinguished sociologist.

Desai was deeply involved in research at Baroda. I cannot say how much he enjoyed teaching at Bhavnagar, but I have heard that he did not enjoy teaching B.A. and M.A. classes very much in Baroda. Professor A. M. Shah has told me that when I. P. Desai had to teach the paper on “Indian Society” to him and his class mates in the M.A. class in the M. S. University in 1954-55, he gave just one lecture in a whole term. He discussed the books in the syllabus and then asked the students to read them and prepare for examination. It appears that he enjoyed informal discussions with students more than classroom lecturing. This impression of Shah is corroborated by others also who studied under Desai at Baroda. Obviously he did a lot of research both at Poona and Baroda. Moreover, in Baroda he trained Ph.D. students, although even in this respect he did not like to give too much of guidance to Ph.D. students. That is, he did not like to spoon-feed
them. He liked the students to think for themselves and go ahead independently in research.

I. P. Desai ended this tension between teaching and research by resigning prematurely from the M. S. University and starting a research centre in Surat, where he devoted all time to research, i.e., from 1966 to 1985. Another idea behind I. P. Desai’s migration from a large university to a small and independent research centre was to conduct research on villages, untouchables, tribes etc. and their developmental problems in a small region. Therefore, he gave the name “Centre for Regional Development Studies” to his research centre in Surat. He wanted to work on problems of a small region, namely, South Gujarat, rather than Gujarat as a whole, let alone India as a whole. It is also possible that he wanted to do research on the problems of his native area. It was only later, due to the requirement of funding agencies, that he changed the name to “Centre for Social Studies”.

There was probably another reason for his migration from Baroda to Surat. As a Professor, the Head of the Department of Sociology, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at M. S. University, he was getting more and more involved in administration and its politics. This gave him less and less time for research. He wanted to get away from all this, so that he could devote more time to his research.

Although Desai was not comfortable giving class-room lectures, he was an inspiring teacher. He inspired many students to do Ph.D. I give below in Table 7.1 the details of students who completed Ph.D. in various fields of sociology under his official guidance and received the degree from the M. S. University of Baroda. This table

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includes a few students who had actually worked under the guidance of M. N. Srinivas, but submitted their theses after he left. For administrative reasons they submitted their theses during the headship of I. P. Desai. If we exclude these students, six students actually completed their Ph.D. under the guidance of I. P. Desai. Desai’s interests in the sociology of education, sociology of caste, sociology of tribe, and sociology of social change are reflected in the various topics of research of his Ph.D. students. One can say that his academic career achieved a high peak in Baroda.

Table 7.1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Author’s name</th>
<th>Title of Thesis</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part - A: Guided by and Submitted during I. P. Desai’s Time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B. V Shah</td>
<td>Social Background of Students of M. S University of Baroda</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A. S. Patel</td>
<td>Social Background of High School Students in Kaira District</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K. Raman Unn</td>
<td>Caste in South Malbar</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Savitri Sahas</td>
<td>High School Students of Baroda</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Neeta Desai</td>
<td>Gujarati Society in Nineteenth Century (An Analysis of Social Change)</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>B. G Desai</td>
<td>The Emerging Youth</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part - B: Guided by M.N. Srinivas but Submitted during I. P. Desai’s Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K. Gnanambal</td>
<td>The Religion of Three Travancore Tribes</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>V H Jodha</td>
<td>Economic Development and Social Change in South Gujarat</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>N. R. Seth</td>
<td>The Social Background of Some Industrial Workers in Baroda City</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A M Shah</td>
<td>Social Structure &amp; Change in a Gujarat Village</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surat: The fourth part of Productive Phase

The last part of I. P. Desai’s academic life (1966-1985) was spent in Surat. This part began with the establishment of an independent research centre, namely, the Centre for Regional Development Studies, under the sponsorship of Navyug Trust. It had modest
financial support. It was re-named Centre for Social Studies in 1974 when it began to receive adequate grants from ICSSR and Government of Gujarat. While he was in Baroda, he was associated with an ICSSR project on education but the results of this project were published after he came to Surat in the form of two books. During this period he published one book and two edited books (1967b, 1970b, 1976b). His and Gore's introduction in *Papers in the sociology of Education in India* was a very significant contribution in the field of education. Other books: *Untouchability in Rural Gujarat* (1976b; translated in Gujarati in 1984) and his last book with A. M. Shah, *Division and Hierarchy*, published in 1988, after his death in 1985 (translated into Gujarati in 1993), are important contributions in their own fields. During this part of his productive phase, he produced twenty-seven writings including articles and mimeograph reports, seven of which are in Gujarati. His emphasis during this phase of his academic life was on the study of problems of untouchables and tribals in Gujarat. He studied the Vedchhi movement in South Gujarat, which is again his contribution to a new field in sociology. His contribution as a member of the Backward Class Commission, known as Rane Commission, appointed by the Government of Gujarat, was most important as well as controversial.

Desai also guided a few students for Ph.D. in Surat. I give a list of students who completed Ph.D. under his guidance at Surat in Table 7.2. He guided three Ph.D. students at Surat. Two of them wrote their theses in Gujarati and one in English. Even at Surat, education had been his favourite subject of research. He also emphasized the study of the problems of untouchables and tribals.
Desai remained academically active till his last breath. During his academic life in Baroda, he tried to address himself to the wider issues of all India level, such as family, migration, and social change, while at Surat he got more involved in micro level research and paid more attention to the problems and issues that prevailed in the surrounding region in South Gujarat. He attracted several Dutch scholars at Surat, such as Kriss Bux, Jan Breman and Van Der Veen, who worked on problems of south Gujarat. They also contributed to the development of the Centre for Social Studies by enriching its library.

Summary of I. P. Desai’s Works

I. P. Desai contributed significantly in the various areas of sociology by adopting modern research techniques. He developed new insights related to sociology of education, family, caste, untouchability, reservation, migration, and social change. In this section, I shall summarise briefly his contributions in these fields of sociology.
Desai was pioneered the field of sociology of education in India. His study of high school students in Poona was the earliest empirical sociological study in the field of education. He studied students in the 10th and 11th standards. He used the questionnaire method for data collection, and made a few general observations about the high school students in Poona. The students’ area of residence and the school he attended, were determined by their caste. Even some personal aspects such as students’ hobbies, daily routine, and future plans were also determined by their caste. This study attempts to show that the educational system of Poona was influenced by its social system, particularly the caste system. The traditional stratification system was found to be interrelated with the education system of Poona. Desai could not draw any wider generalization nor could he formulate a hypothesis because he did not have complete information about the students. However, the significance of this study was great as a pioneering empirical study, using the questionnaire method for the first time, and the logic of structural-functionalism.

Gore and Desai discussed the scope of sociology of education in their edited book *Papers in the Sociology of Education*. In their paper they discussed the relationship of education with other sub-systems of society such as kinship, stratification, and political system. They emphasised the study of interactions within the system of education (i.e., interaction among students, teachers and administrators), and also its interaction with other sub-systems of society.

On the basis of field studies conducted in eight different states in India, Gore, Desai and Chitnis prepared an all-India report. The field studies were undertaken to
examine the social background, social values, and occupational aspirations and
satisfactions of the three components of the education system, namely, students, teachers,
and parents. Their purpose was to find out the role of education in society and how it
could help in bringing about social change in India. The field studies provide information
regarding the attitudes and opinions of students, teachers, and parents of the students on
different aspects of education. However, they could not clearly examine the role of
education in bringing about social change in India. Later on Desai studied the educational
problems of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students in Gujarat. He pointed out that
the level of education among the STs was low compared to that of SCs. He suggested the
measures to be undertaken to improve education among the STs.

Sociology of the Family

Desai in his famous study of family in Mahuva raised two issues regarding joint
family in India: (1) the issue of the definition of joint family and (2) the future of joint
family. He pointed out that it was difficult to find a complete definition of joint family,
which can take care of all aspects of joint family. He used household as the unit of
observation. He classified households into four types and then categorised them as nuclear
or joint families. The household in which members of three or more generations lived
together was called joint family. On the basis of this data he could not judge whether the
norm of joint living was weakening, because joint residence was only one of the
manifestations of jointness. Then he analysed households on the basis of different
degrees of jointness. He decided the degree of jointness on the basis of joint residence,
joint property, recognition of mutual obligations, and kinship relationship. The
classification of households based on different aspects of jointness was a distinct feature of this study. He concluded that jointness could exist without common residence or common property. He examined the relationship of jointness with property, education, and stay in urban area and tried to establish correlation. He concluded that property was not the cause of jointness, that jointness was not related to education or religion, or stay in urban area. He observed that kinship relation and obligations were important factors in maintaining jointness. He argued that in future, jointness based on acceptance of mutual obligations would be found more prevalent than any other aspect of jointness. Therefore, he said that the norm of jointness would continue to exist in Indian society. This was Desai's distinct analysis of joint family in Mahuva. He questioned the popular assumption that in India the joint family was being replaced by the nuclear family. According to him, the emergent family form in India could be a combination of nuclearity and jointness with distinct characteristics.

He followed a scientific approach in the study of family in Mahuva. He used survey method, questionnaire technique, coding, tabulation and statistical analysis. It was a study of social change using modernization approach. He used this approach much before the theory of modernization became popular. He also challenged the convergence theory of modernization.

He made a comparative analysis of family systems in South East Asia. According to convergence theory of modernization, all traditional societies are being transformed into the mould of modern developed societies. Hence industrialization destroyed the joint
family system and it was replaced by the nuclear family system. On the basis of investigations made in India, Desai showed that joint family was not destroyed in India.

**Sociology of Caste, Untouchability and Reservation**

Desai and Damle examined whether there was any change in the caste system on the basis of Ghurye's description of caste system given in 1932 and in 1955. According to Desai, in 1950, caste remained a segmental, endogamous division of society. The three other features, viz., (1) restriction on feeding and social intercourse, (2) civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections, and (3) lack of choice of occupations, had undergone great change. He discussed these features on the basis of observations made by Ghurye and Gardner Murphy and raised two questions: (1) how far these features had really disappeared? And (2) what was its effect on the caste system as a whole? Ghurye and Murphy reported disappearance of these features. Desai pointed out that its disappearance varied according to the strata of population, and it did not affect the caste system as a whole. He further pointed out that even inter-caste marriages, urbanization and education had failed to change the caste system. Caste continued to exist as a segmental division of society, because the changes were not guided by any ideology. Moreover, according to him, caste was one of the psychological possessions of the people. He disagreed with Ghurye that caste associations reflect caste solidarity. He expressed that unity based on interest would be more prevalent in future.

Untouchability has been the age-old problem of Indian society and closely tied up with the caste system. Desai studied the practice of untouchability in rural Gujarat. He
observed its practice in different areas of life. The chances of its disappearance were rare, because it was practiced among the untouchables themselves. Therefore, he felt that it might continue in one or other spheres of life. Measures to diminish its practice required monitoring of proper implementation of law by the untouchables themselves. Economic development in rural areas could also act positively to reduce untouchability.

The government has provided reservation of seats in legislative bodies, educational institutions, and government jobs for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, the issue of reservation is closely related to the issue of untouchability. As long as reservation exists, untouchability will exist. As regards the Other Backward Classes or the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, Desai firmly believed that caste should not be the basis for judging social and educational backwardness. Occupation and income were the right parameters to judge social and educational backwardness. He believed that the caste-based protection would mean protection to caste system.

Sociology of Migration

The study of migration in Parujan was a pioneering study in the field of sociology of migration in India. It was based on a novel method of data collection, namely case-history analysis and group interviews. Generally migration is studied as a factor of social change. Migration was known to people of Parujan. He observed the migration pattern for the village as a whole. The most important observation was that migration was related to the social structure of the village and not to the knowledge of availability of opportunities outside the village. He noticed an important social change in
Parujan, namely, change in relationships between individuals and groups. The inter-caste relations were transformed into employer-employee relations, governed by market forces. This affected the hierarchical feature of caste system. Thus, there was a change in the direction of industrial society. The village had changed socially.

Sociology of Social Change

Desai was keenly interested in the study of social change. He said, therefore, that anything that informed him about social change interested him. The entire sociology of I. P. Desai can be considered as sociology of social change. It must be noted that in his studies of education, family, caste, untouchability, migration, etc., he was concerned with observation of the general problems of social change. From the beginning of his academic career, his basic approach was that of social change. He critically examined Sovani and Pradhan's analysis of social change in Poona. Their analysis was based on the figures of occupational mobility, whereas, according to Desai, neither the size of a population nor the occupational composition of a city could indicate the nature and quality of social relationships. Here he argued as a sociologist against the economic and demographic argument of change. He also wrote about the new elites and their role in bringing about social change in India.

His most important contribution regarding the study of social change was his concept of "Desired Type of Society". According to Desai, when we talk of social change we generally think in terms of change from past to the present, but we should also think about the direction of change in the future, i.e., a model society that we want to achieve. That model becomes the desired type of society. It means that the society needs to be
changed to achieve a desirable type of society. Therefore, he saw the need for such a concept in sociology.

Social change can also be achieved through social movements. Desai pioneered the field of sociology of social movements by studying two movements in south Gujarat. He studied the movement for an autonomous Adivasi state in Gujarat, and the Vedchhi movement. He studied them to examine their effect on social change.

I. P. Desai as a Person

I. P. Desai lived a very simple life. He was typically an Indian in many ways. He wore Indian dress – dhoti, shirt and coat. He always preferred to speak in Gujarati language while interacting with other Gujarati speaking persons. His style of thinking and writing was typically Indian. He was fond of simple Gujarati food, dal-bhat (Joshi, Vidyut 2002: 5). Because of his style of life some Indian sociologists used to call him chacha (uncle). I. P. Desai’s dress pattern and simple life style could be attributed to his conviction in the political ideology of Marx and his concern for the welfare of the simple folk in villages and towns. In one respect, however, he was atypical: he remained unmarried throughout his life. He thus remained totally dedicated to intellectual and professional life.

Desai had donated his life long savings to the Centre for Social Studies, Surat, but he never mentioned about it to any one. He was very kind at heart. He used to take care of all who worked in the Centre. He advised them even in the matters of health. At times
when some one experienced shortage of money, he used his personal money to make payment of salary to all those who worked in the Centre.

There were many contradictions in his behaviour (Joshi, Vidyut 2002: 6). He would talk about the tribals while he travelled in an air-conditioned railway coach. He used to keep a chauffeur driven car and would go to buy sweets — typical Gujarati sweets, like Baraf and Ghari — in his car. He played cricket, hockey and tennis with students in Bhavnagar even while wearing dhoti. He wrote about it in his biographical essay “In the evenings I played cricket, hockey and tennis according to seasons” (1981c: 25). In formal seminars he would often sit with crossed legs on chair. During the last years of his life, he practiced yoga, and as soon as he was out of yoga sadhana, he would start talking about strategy for social change.

Desai was a strict administrator. I learned from one of his associates at Surat that he would never leave the office of the Centre before 6.00 p.m. and also arrived in the office at the right time. Therefore, all those working in the Centre also had to observe strict discipline and could leave only on time. According to N. R. Sheth, I. P. Desai resigned from the Deanship of the Faculty of Arts in the M. S. University of Baroda due to his commitment to certain values.

I. P. Desai was casual in his writing. Frequently, some one else had to correct and polish not only his English but also even his Gujarati writings. He mentioned this in a note: “I would not be able to express myself in English as neatly and as effectively as Edward Shils. What is worse, I am not trained to write in my own tongue” (1981c: 154). In some cases he described and explained in detail the methodology used in his research
and why he used it, for example, in his books on *High School Students in Poona* and *Some Aspects of Family in Mahuva*. At the same time he was casual about giving references. In his book, *The Craft of Sociology*, he did not cite page numbers of his publications and in some cases even volume number of journals in which his papers were published. In these respects he was very different from M. N. Srinivas, who wrote lucid and impeccable English and was meticulous in references and citations.

**I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas**

I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas were co-students in Bombay University. They studied for Ph.D. degree under G. S. Ghurye. After that, Srinivas went abroad for further studies at Oxford. I. P. Desai never went abroad. After a gap of almost eight years, they were again together in the Department of Sociology at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1952 as colleagues. By that time M. N. Srinivas had a great deal of exposure to the developments in sociology and social anthropology abroad. Srinivas strongly believed in the integration of sociology and social anthropology in India, whereas I. P. Desai believed in keeping the two subjects separate as found in the U.S.A. In his first publication, Desai expressed his differences with Srinivas in very strong words. He referred to Srinivas as social anthropologist and considered himself a sociologist, "Dr. Srinivas is primarily a social anthropologist and he would like to merge his discipline with sociology and call it comparative sociology" (Desai 1981c: 4). This indicated that Desai considered himself a sociologist. Throughout his life, Desai remained opposite to Srinivas in certain academic matters. He criticized many things that Srinivas did, particularly during his Baroda phase. This was probably because of differences in
political orientations of I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas. Srinivas was non-Marxist whereas I. P. Desai was committed to Marxist ideology. Another probable reason could be that they were colleagues and therefore there could be competition between them. However, they remained friends till the end and Desai mentioned it in his autobiographical article in the form of a note (1981c: 53, Note 4), “The personal element in this relationship must be mentioned. Srinivas and I have been together from 1937 as students in Bombay. The friendship grew at Baroda and continues. Whatever intellectual differences we had were cooled by cracking jokes on our orientation preferences”. The perception of I. P. Desai about his relationship with Srinivas as mentioned in 1981 seems quite different from the impression we get from his writing in 1952. This is not to be considered unusual because the circumstances in 1981 were not the same as in 1952.

In his first paper (1952), Desai acknowledged the development of sociology in India as was reflected in the formation of its professional body, namely, Indian Sociological Society, and its journal, Sociological Bulletin. In this paper he presented a brief summary of all papers published in the first volume of Sociological Bulletin, but devoted more attention and space to express his differences with the views of Srinivas regarding sociology and social anthropology. Srinivas suggested: “We could of course do away with the distinction between sociology and social anthropology and include them both under comparative sociology” (Desai 1981c: 6). Desai believed that the differences between sociology and social anthropology were deeper. According to him, the first difference is regarding the nature and function of science and the second is regarding the nature and function of the science of society. The function of science is to discover causal connections and build theory. Desai asked a question to Srinivas whether a social
anthropologist would be satisfied with comparing the social structures of different societies at different times and places and will arrive at descriptive statements about social relationships or causal statements about social relationships. According to Desai, if you do not arrive at causal statements, then it would remain a piece of literary work. To quote him, “We observe facts, we study societies, and we compare them. To what end? Our ultimate aim is to construct a theoretical model of society. The study of small societies and of parts of the modern industrial complex society becomes significant only in the light of this aim. Otherwise, they will remain as pieces of literary composition, embellished by the terminology of science” (Desai 1981c: 8). I. P. Desai believed that “Social Anthropology and Sociology are two separate but not independent disciplines; they are complementary to each other” (1981c: 7). He pointed out here that sociology takes into account primitive societies and that the comparative method is implicit in it. He agreed with the British anthropologist Raymond Firth that social anthropology deals with micro problems whereas sociology deals with macro problems. Thus, on the one hand Desai said that the two disciplines were separate but contradicted this statement by saying that they were complementary to each other. As pointed out by Vidyut Joshi, I. P. Desai was a person with contradictions.

I think the academic differences between I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas were stronger during their stay in Baroda than in their later life. Srinivas was aware about it. About his choice for I. P. Desai for appointment as Reader in the Department of Sociology in Baroda, Srinivas said (1981: 180), “I knew that I. P.’s ideas of sociology were different from mine in some ways but I regarded it as a factor in his favour. I wanted some one who would supplement my skills”. Srinivas again wrote about I. P.
Desai in 1988, "IP and I remained friends to the end but he did not conceal his dislike of the kind of work I was doing". However, the academic differences did not interfere with their friendship. To quote Srinivas (1988), "All in all, we disagreed on many matters but that did not affect our personal relations".

After 1952, in 1981, Desai wrote about his differences with Srinivas, in his paper on "Craft of Sociology", wherein he described the position as it prevailed in those days in India (1981c: 46-47): “Until 1950 there were no distinctions between anthropology and sociology in India. K. P. Chattopadhyaya came to be treated as an anthropologist because he was appointed in the department of anthropology. He would have become a sociologist if he were appointed in Bombay University. Similarly Iravati Karve, a practicing anthropologist was in the department of sociology, and M. N. Srinivas had throughout held chairs in the department of sociology. Further, there was no intellectual or academic ground for the separation of anthropology and sociology. Though there could be competition between anthropologists and sociologists, conflict between the two would benefit neither. There was tolerance of each other if not co-operation between the two. It is significant, as Ghurye mentions, that though the department of anthropology was developing under K. P. Chattopadhyaya and that of sociology under his guidance, both of them were the branches of the same trunk - W. H. R. Rivers. It was under this intellectual climate inherited by me that Srinivas confronted me with social anthropology. Neither Srinivas nor I made much of the difference between the terminologies though Srinivas held that social anthropology was the true or real sociology. He went beyond the understanding that anthropology was merely concerned with the primitive societies by encouraging the study of villages and peasant societies. His position even then was that it
could also study more complex societies. For instance, he often mentioned the book by Fustel de Coulange on *Ancient City* (1864). He was thus introducing what he called ‘history’ into the studies in social anthropology. His student A. M. Shah had started working with this frame of reference.”

It seems to me that even their academic differences were more influenced by I. P. Desai’s belief in Marxist ideology. This is confirmed by the following statement of I. P. Desai (1981c: 47), “But my understanding of history was different from his understanding. I had inherited the study of history from the evolutionists or of developmentalists and it was also influenced by Marxist writers, though not exclusively by Marx. It interrelated the past, present and future and was something nearer to what is now called ‘continuity and change’. Srinivas’s main target of attack was all such understanding that smacked of evolutionary change and Marxism. He and the American and British scholars who came to India in the 1950s accused Marxists as being dogmatic. Indeed, they were no less dogmatic in their anti-Marxism. This attitude of theirs did not enhance my respect for them”. This clearly indicates that the root of academic differences was the belief in political ideology held by I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas.

At times Desai expressed his basic agreement with Srinivas’s views but expressed disagreement on minor points. For example, Desai approved of the usefulness of the field-work method but differed from Srinivas who believed that it was the only method for collecting reliable information. To quote Desai (1981c: 48) “Srinivas’s strong point was his emphasis on field-work method. I too had recognized its usefulness in the conclusion of my study of *High School Students in Poona* (1953). Srinivas, however,
held, at least at that time, that intensive field-work was the sole method of getting reliable knowledge of society or social phenomenon. I was neither convinced of this position then, nor I am now. I used the underlying principles of this method in my own way in my study of Mahuva and subsequent work”. This was the position in 1953 but later it changed and Desai noted, “He relented from that position subsequently” (1981c: 53, Note 7).

Academicians do change their views. Srinivas and Desai were not exceptions in this regard. At least in the beginning, i.e., in 1952 to 1954 Srinivas could be said to be oriented to status quo and Desai was oriented to change. However, a change in this position came by 1955 when Srinivas published an article entitled “Castes: Can They Exist in India of Tomorrow?” This article was actually presented at a seminar in Delhi. Interestingly, Srinivas was the Director, and I. P. Desai the Secretary General, of this seminar. Srinivas also wrote at this time in Baroda his famous essay “Caste in Modern India”. Thus Srinivas began to analyse social change in Indian society while he was in Baroda. In 1956 Srinivas explained change using two concepts: Sanskritization and Westernization. So the differences between Desai and Srinivas were reduced to a great extent. However, Srinivas preferred to remain an academician; and Desai did not reject activism though he remained basically an academician.

Srinivas consistently advocated the use of fieldwork method whereas Desai recognized the importance of survey method as well as quantitative analysis. Again, in 1984, I. P. Desai critically examined and evaluated Srinivas’s work in his paper, “The Western Educated Elites and Social Change in India”. It was considerably revised and
published in *Social Structure and Change*, Volume 1 (ed. by Shah, Baviskar and Ramaswamy, 1996) published in honour of M. N. Srinivas. In this paper I. P. Desai provided a re-reading of Srinivas’s *Social Change in Modern India* (1966) with a focus on the Western educated elites. By and large he approved of his analysis but expressed a doubt about its relevance in 1996. It is interesting to note that I. P. Desai had given the draft of this paper to M. N. Srinivas for his comments, and some of the comments were included in the paper. This indicated their spirit of scholarly friendship.

Desai’s basic position, elaborated not only in the above paper but also in his other writings, is that sociologists should be concerned not only with the analysis of empirical situations but also with the concept of what he calls ‘desirable type of society’. From this point of view, he finds that in Srinivas “there is a tendency to be empirical, so much so that it might lead to the trend of his becoming an empiricist – someone might add if he is not already one. His tendency to emphasize the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of an enquiry need not be deplored. I would only like it to be seen with reference to the future type of society to be envisaged” (Desai 1996: 100).

Desai believed that “the society envisaged by the directive principles given in the Constitution of 1950 should be the society desired by us”. However, he bemoans that “The Western educated elite which is believed to have framed the Constitution, does not want to defend it – the same elite the formation of which Srinivas delineates in *Social Change in Modern India*”. Srinivas said that the discovery of India’s past “produced a certain amount of palaeocentrism in all educated Indians and, as is well known, a great past can be either energiser or opiate. In the main, however, it acted as energiser, and has
provided modern India with a mystique for national identity as well as development”. According to Desai, the western educated elite was the energizer of fundamentalism in all religious communities. And there is threat to Indian society from their ideology.

Desai believed in the unity of thought and action. According to him, thought not related to action is contemplative thought, and he believed that Indian intellectuals and academicians were indulging in ‘contemplative type’ of thinking. Desai pointed out in this paper that Srinivas did not think about many questions regarding social change, such as, what is the direction of change? How is that direction decided? Does that change take place on its own without the intervention of human beings? What is the role of academicians in bringing about that change? According to Desai, the society envisaged in the constitution of 1950 should be the society desired by us, and all movements should be motivated by that end. He narrated the political situation in India that all political parties were interested in winning the election but they were not serious about their programmes. The western educated elites who framed the constitution did not want to defend it. Thus the major difference between I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas continued to exist regarding the desired type of society and the role of elites in realizing that end.

As time passed, the differences between Desai and Srinivas got reduced and Desai’s attitude towards Srinivas changed. In this paper he frequently wrote in praise of Srinivas. To quote him (1984a: 639) “Srinivas comes to my succour with the clarity in thinking and writing which I envy as a friend”. Srinivas had greater clarity, articulation, visibility, consistency and influence than Desai had, who at times appeared to be less clear, less articulate, ambivalent and less influential. Desai recognized the significance of
Srinivas's two books: *India: Social Structure* (1980) and *Social Change in Modern India* (1966) and wrote, "Even today the description would stand, of course, with amendments and modifications due to the developments -- social, economic, religious and political -- during the last 15 years or so. That is the value of both of these books -- not a small value" (Desai 1996: 82). Here you can see Desai as a real scholar who does not mind appreciating the works of another scholar even though they had many differences. This is the beauty of his personality and their relationship. Desai gave the draft of this last paper to Srinivas for comments which reflected their confidence in each other's scholarship. They pointed out the shortcomings as well as the positive aspects of each other's academic work but it did not come in the way of their personal friendship.

Here is an attempt to compare I. P. Desai with M. N. Srinivas. Srinivas was more anthropological; Desai was more sociological. Srinivas emphasized fieldwork observation and qualitative analysis; Desai emphasized survey method, questionnaire, technical measurement and quantitative analysis. Srinivas was more influenced by structural-functional analysis and therefore was oriented to status quo at least in the beginning; Desai was more change oriented. Srinivas preferred to remain an academician; Desai did not reject activism though he remained basically an academician. Srinivas was consistent in using fieldwork method; Desai pioneered many substantive areas and used different methodology. Srinivas was basically influenced by British social anthropology; Desai was more influenced by American sociology. Srinivas was trained both in India and abroad. Desai was trained only in India, he never went abroad, and apparently Srinivas was more westernised and Desai was more traditional. Srinivas had greater
depth in his research; Desai had wider range. As stated earlier, Srinivas had greater clarity, articulation, visibility, consistency and influence than did Desai who at times appeared to be less clear, less articulate, ambivalent and had lesser visibility and influence. Therefore Srinivas had greater impact in Indian sociology than did I. P. Desai. I feel that both stalwarts were mature enough so that their academic differences did not come in the way of their personal friendship and they always remained good friends.

One Ph.D. student (P. T. Thomas) in the Department of Sociology at M. S. University wrote in the introduction of his unpublished thesis about I. P. Desai and M. N. Srinivas; “First and foremost I wish to thank Dr. M. N. Srinivas to whom, more than to anyone else, I could apply the description, ‘friend, philosopher and guide’. I am happy to count myself as one who has been brought under his influence in my theoretical and field studies in social anthropology. Next to only Dr. Srinivas I want to thank Dr. I. P. Desai, reader in sociology in Baroda. No two men could be unlike each other than Srinivas and Desai: one, the keen Oxford intellectual; the other, the scholar-iconoclast who would call a spade a bloody shovel: In their different ways these two men have given me more than I can adequately express”. The students and colleagues benefited from the opposite views of these two scholars; they could develop a more balanced view and understanding of sociology.