Chapter 3
Sociology of the Family

The family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood/consanguinity, or by bonds of marriage/affinity. In this sense the family is a social institution found in all societies. According to Iravati Karve (1965), to understand any cultural phenomenon in India, it is necessary to understand three things: the linguistic region, the institution of caste, and the family organization. To quote Karve, “The third important factor in Indian life is the family and by family is meant here the joint family” (1965: 8). According to Kapadia, “The joint family system has been one of the three potent factors in the continuance of cultural traditions” (1955: 233); two other factors have been village and caste. A. M. Shah also accepts the significance of the joint family. To quote him, “Scholars have considered the joint family to be one of the three most fundamental structures in Indian society, the other two being caste and village” (1974: 107).

The family in India is generally described as the patrilineal, patrilocal extended family, often also called the joint family. It is supposed to be a characteristic of the Hindus but is also found among many non-Hindu communities. Within India itself the family in some communities in Kerala and North-East is different from the general pattern of Indian family: it is matrilineal. The matrilineal family has matrilineal descent and matrilocal residence. In Kerala, the Nairs and in Meghalaya, the Khasis and the Garos have matrilineal family.
According to Kapadia, "The basis of the Hindu joint family was that the different members of it should dwell in the same house, take their meals and perform their worship together and enjoy the property in common" (1955: 236). The essential feature of the old joint family was that no member of the family could demand any definite proportion of property because the coparceners were a loose fluctuating body to which additions and subtractions were made by birth, adoption, marriage, death, or separation. With the advent of the British, a transformation of Indian cultural pattern became inevitable by virtue of the new economic organization, ideology, and administrative system. They introduced capitalism in economic system, liberalism as an ideology, and equality in social and political systems. They introduced a uniform criminal code for the whole of India. But in civil matters, people were governed by their personal law and usage. The British judges, who had to administer justice, did not understand the personal law of Hindus as it was written in Sanskrit language. So they relied upon the translations made by western scholars and the interpretations given by some Indian Pundits. The courts gave importance to individual interest, as a result of which the partitioning of family property became common. Widows were given share in the family property. Thus the administration of the Hindu Law by British courts resulted in influencing the disintegration of the joint family organization due to the assertion of the individual inheritance right to property held by the head of the family.

The social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar propagated in favour of western education for all, including women in India. The new economic system and administrative machinery encouraged educated young men to seek employment outside home. Industrialization brought into existence industrial
cities and encouraged migration of people from rural areas to cities. Slowly, in cities a new mode of family life evolved which was inconsistent with the traditional family pattern. As a result of all these forces, it was felt that women's position in the joint family was not tolerable and they should be given some economic security by legislation. Two legislations came into existence: (1) The Hindu Law of Inheritance (Amendment act) of 1929 recognized some females such as son's daughter, daughter's daughter, sister, and sister's daughter as heirs in the joint family property. (2) The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937 entitled a widow to her husband's share in the family property. These Acts have had considerable influence on the Hindu joint family.

The traditional joint family provided social security to its members. In all types of crises a person depended on his/her family. But the development of government, semi-government, and other services providing some economic security in the form of gratuity, pension or provident fund available after retirement, minimized the social security function provided by joint family. Though industrial labour and the salaried employees of the government and semi-government institutions was provided social security, the agricultural class was not provided social security by law, and thus the social security role of joint family continued to be important for them. In a survey conducted by Kapadia, teachers voted in favour of the joint family. Majority of teachers (192 out of 372) expressed their desire to continue as members of joint family. Thus the social security role contributed to the existence of joint family. The joint performance of Shraddha by the members of joint family also contributed to the continued existence of joint family. Moreover, the fact about Hindus is that they break away from one joint
family to build up a new joint family with their sons and grandsons. This reflects deep-rooted sentiments of Hindus in favour of joint family.

The scholars in modern India assumed that the changes introduced by the British had an impact on three important institutions of India: village, caste, and joint family. So they got engaged in analyzing the changes that came in these institutions. Kapadia also studied the changes in family and finally concluded that the joint family was likely to continue. On the basis of a survey of teachers in Navsari, Kapadia expressed his views about the future of joint family in India: “Although believed to be outmoded, joint family is not likely to collapse in the near future” (1955:252).

As pointed out by A. M. Shah (1973), all early studies of Indian family were based on information given in classical literature and classical Hindu Law. Thus, the Indological view of Indian family was also the legal view of Indian family. Until the 1930s, the Indological-cum-legal view of Indian family dominated the sociological studies of Indian family. The Indological and legal view held that the Indian family was a monotype, large, multi-functional, and three-or-more-generational group. Kapadia gives us an Indological and legal view of Indian family in his book, *Marriage and Family in India* (1955). He considered classical literature as portraying the true state of the family in pre-British India and used it as the base for the study of changes in the family in the modern times. After 1955, there were some attempts to undertake empirical studies of family by scholars. However, they were not full-fledged empirical studies.
In sociology, the joint family is always understood in relation to elementary (or nuclear) family. The generally accepted meaning of “elementary family” is “a group composed of a man, his wife and their children”. The dichotomy of elementary and joint family has continued to be the foundation of the description, analysis, and discussion of the Indian family. Social scientists have been discussing changes in the joint family system in India in the framework of this dichotomy. They have been concerned with the question whether the family in India will be joint or nuclear? The nuclear family is found existing in industrially developed societies whereas the joint family is found existing in industrially less developed or developing societies. Since India has been an underdeveloped country, sociologists have been concerned about the future form of the family in India. The question is whether the family in India will be joint or nuclear. It is a puzzle which the scholars have been trying to solve since a long time. From this brief discussion on the family, two major issues arise: the first issue is regarding the definition of the joint family, and the second issue is regarding the future form of the family. Desai in his studies of the family in India, dealt with the issue of jointness of the joint family in India as well as, with the future of the joint family in India.

Desai’s interest in the family could be traced back to his first study of high school students in Poona. He asked six to seven questions pertaining to student’s family and attitude to the family. Tables 60 to 67 in his book (1953: 120-123) provide data regarding the family life of high school students. The high school students were asked whether their family was an elementary family or the joint family. 60 percent of them replied that their families were joint. Here he remarked, “The percentage of joint families appears large because we believe that joint families in India are going out of existence” (1953: 37).
observations on the family written in his book, *In the Minds of Men* (1953). In 1950 Murphy came to India as a UNESCO consultant to organize research to find out the reasons for social tensions in India. He studied the factors that contributed to unity as well as conflict. He wrote a report on his impressions about positive forces working for national unity in his book. While discussing the sources of tensions he discussed the problems of the family and the caste system in India, and wrote a chapter on family in his book. He appreciated the joint living of the joint family but said that it curbed initiative, inclination, and aptitudes of individuals. He raised the doubt, whether caste and the joint family will continue to exist in modern India.

Desai discussed the book in detail and pointed out that Murphy’s assumption that when a non-industrial society comes in contact with industrial society, the family in the former changes in the direction of the family in the latter, was wrong. Desai pointed out that the traditional joint family was only modified, and a different type of joint family came into existence, which differed in its composition. He also said that there were changes in the authority within the joint family. Particularly, the literate and higher caste families became less authoritarian compared to the past. Moreover, Desai pointed out that the traditional joint family did hinder the individual’s initiative and ability but later it changed its function. The joint family began to help its members to take education, and the members were free to decide about their career or job. Thus there were modifications in the structure and functions of the joint family.

Similarly, as regards caste Desai said that it was in the process of modification, but the system continued to exist. Caste consciousness also continued to exist. Caste
associations emerged while caste panchayat became less effective. According to Murphy, the joint family and arranged marriages perpetuated the caste system. Urbanization and education were two other factors, which could have affected the caste system. But, in India urbanization was not the result of industrialization and therefore it was not a strong force to bring about change in society. Education as a force of social change was also not found to have uniform influence. Its impact differed according to the social strata from which the students came and the educational institutions in which they were trained.

According to Desai, the fault lay with the theory of social change, which said that contact initiates change. He disagreed with this theory of social change. He said, “Contact does not initiate change. It may push change if it is compatible with change”. He believed that change arises out of internal developments in a given society. It does not come through external contact alone. The history of caste and joint family suggests that whenever there were inconsistencies within these institutions and in their relations with other sub-systems of society, they had modified themselves. These institutions have been modified from time to time before Indian society came into contact with Western society. Therefore, as long as these institutions can maintain consistency in internal and external relationships, the question of their existence in future was viewed as out of place.

I. P. Desai’s second publication on the family was a paper, “Symposium on Caste and Joint Family: An Analysis”, (1955b). At that time there was a general opinion that the joint family was fast disappearing and the nuclear family was replacing it. According to Desai, these were subjective reflections of individuals based on limited observations and were conditioned by their socio-economic background. He pointed out that the joint
family had always been changing but it was believed that the changes in the last 50 years had affected the joint-ness of the joint family.

In this paper, Desai commented upon the analysis made by the Census official J. B. Bowman in the census publication entitled "Digest of the Census Report for Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch" (Not available). Desai agreed with Bowman's observation that the old style joint family was rare compared to the commonly supposed idea, but Desai disagreed with Bowman's conception of old style joint family. According to Bowman the old style joint family was one in which numerous families lived together. According to Desai, the joint family has its own range of relationships and is not a conglomeration of numerous nuclear families.

The census had inferred the type of family and its prevalence from the size of the family, and the size of the family was inferred from the size of household. Desai argued against the wrong logic used by Census officials. The census divided households into four types – small, medium, large and very large – in villages as well as towns. The number of small size households was taken as an indication of the breaking up of joint families. Desai argued that the size of household did not indicate the size of the family. Instead the number of persons living in different types of households was more significant. It indicated the strength of the joint family relationship. A good number of families in cities were branches of the joint families in villages. One family member from a village might have established a household in city as an earning member of the family, but for all social purposes the two families were one joint family. The Census recorded them as two nuclear families, though they were actually the functioning units of
a joint family. The Census did not record this. Therefore, the Census Superintendent had wrongly analyzed small size and medium size households as nuclear families. Desai rightly pointed out that it was incorrect to infer the type of the family from the size of the household.

Moreover, the data on household did not indicate anything about the functional aspect of joint family, which Desai defined as the rights and obligations accepted by individuals as members of the group. They were more important than other features such as co-residence and commensality. The latter were not reliable criteria for judging the type of the family. Moreover, the joint-ness of the separated units in the constant process of fission of joint family can be understood with reference to two things: (1) the feeling of belongingness to the family, and (2) rights and obligations of members of separated units toward one another. Desai was trying to raise the issue of joint-ness of the joint family, and thereby pointed out that the conclusion made by the Census officials was incorrect.

**Study of Joint Family in Mahuva**

Desai’s third publication on family was his book, *Some Aspects of Family in Mahuva* (1964a). It is a sociological study of joint-ness in a small town called Mahuva in Saurashtra. This was a part of a larger research project financed by the Rockefeller Foundation on the recommendation of M. N. Srinivas. The book is divided into two parts. Part I has four sections, and Part II has nine sections along with Appendix A, B, and C.
Appendix A provides information about the classification of families; Appendix B describes fieldwork and schedule, and Appendix C provides investigators' reports. Tables are divided into two parts: Those in Part I give information about different types of the family in Mahuva is given and those in Part II give information about joint-ness and other related variables.

Censuses and surveys on the family used household as the unit of observation. They classified households into two types, nuclear or joint. According to Desai, they made an error to understand household as family. According to them the family was a group of relatives living in a common house. Desai pointed out an error in their conception of family. He argued that persons lived together in a family because they were relatives; they did not become relatives by living in the same house. According to him, family is basically a group of relatives interacting among themselves, and the interaction takes the form of co-operation, competition or conflict. On the basis of role relations and the normative pattern of behaviour among relatives, one could distinguish a joint family from a nuclear family.

In the study of the family in Mahuva, Desai used household as the unit of observation. He classified households into four major types and two sub-types. His classification of households was based on the following aspects: (1) size of the household, (2) kinship relationship among the members of a household, and (3) property relations within the household. The following is Desai's typology of households:

Type Ia: Husband and wife only
Type Ib: Single-member household

Type Iia: Husband, wife and married sons without children, and other unmarried children

Type Iib: Type Iia family with other relatives who do not add to generation depth

Type III: Three-generation group of lineal descendants

Type IV: Four or more than four generations of lineal descendants

Here Types Ia, Ib, Iia and Iib were called nuclear families and Types III and IV, joint families. Type Iib was not a three-generation family and therefore it was not the ideal joint family. When the data based on Classification-I were analyzed, it was found that people measured the depth of the household in terms of lineal descendants. Thus the household was described in terms of generation depth. The household, in which the members living together covered three or more generations, was called the joint household or joint family. Here the relationship in terms of generation was considered to be the essence of joint-ness. In Mahuva, the nuclear households were only 20% more than the joint households. On the basis of data regarding households in Mahuva, it was not possible to judge whether the family system was changing. Since past information about households was not available, it was not possible to judge whether the norm of joint living was weakening.

The term nuclear family referred to the residentially nuclear unit and not to the cultural unit. Residential separation could not be taken as an evidence of the weakening
of the norm of joint living. Desai considered the rules of inheritance, marriage, *shraddha* and impurities at birth and death, and mutual obligations in day-to-day life as evidences of joint-ness or separation. The data about residential households gave only a partial picture regarding joint-ness because joint residence was only one of the manifestations of joint-ness. Desai decided that the household could not be equated with the family because, for him, joint family meant prevalence of the norm of joint-ness, and joint residence was only one of the manifestations of joint-ness.

According to Kapadia (1954), the family had been continually changing in response to changing circumstances, but the belief in jointness or the value of jointness did not change. In modern times the new technology created different circumstances and therefore it was believed that the value of jointness and belief in jointness were incompatible with new circumstances. Desai examined this question in the second part of this book. He tried to examine that the norm of joint-ness could persist without joint property or joint residence.

In part II of this book Desai analyzed households on the basis of different degrees of joint-ness. The following four elements of joint-ness were considered by him in part II: (1) joint residence, (2) joint property, (3) fulfillment or recognition of mutual obligations, and (4) kinship relationship. Desai believed that, except joint residence, other elements were generally associated with joint-ness and they could exist separately from residence and from one another. On the basis of joint-ness, he classified households into following five types:
Type I: Zero degree of jointness (i.e., nuclear family). This was a single-member household comprising of an old widow or widower, or a bachelor, or a married couple with unmarried children. They had no relation with other households. They were nuclear households.

Type II: These were households of low degree of jointness, or jointness expressed by way of mutual obligations. These were residential nuclear households comprising of a husband, wife, and unmarried children. They fulfilled their mutual obligations. Other kin lived separately, with whom they had no property relations.

Type III: These households had high degree of jointness, i.e., they were owners of common property. These households were residentially nuclear but owned common property with members of households living in Mahuva or outside Mahuva. Except residence, they were joint families in every way.

Type IV: Households with higher degree of jointness, or marginally joint families. They comprised of husband, wife, children and one of the parents or some other dependent. Therefore, they were called marginally joint households. They may have less than two, three, or more than three generations living together. They may or may not have relations with other households.

Type V: These households had the highest degree of jointness, and therefore traditional joint families. They consisted of members of three or more than three
exist irrespective of caste, religion, occupation, education, urbanization etc. 21% of the sample expressed traditional jointness; 17% of the sample expressed jointness by way of holding property jointly; 27% of the sample expressed jointness by way of mutual obligations; and 30% of the sample expressed marginal jointness. Thus some element of jointness was commonly observed. However, it was not the traditional type of jointness.

Jointness was found common among all religious groups, namely Hindus, Jains, and Muslims, although some peculiar features of religion, region and tribe led to variations in the sentiment of jointness. Jointness was also not found correlated with a caste. Among business and agricultural castes a greater degree of jointness existed. Regarding the relationship between occupation and jointness, Desai gave importance to occupational relations than to occupational activity. It was found that those who were governed by the new type of occupational relations belonged to families of Types II and III (i.e., they were less joint), whereas occupations governed by traditional relations had a higher degree of jointness.

Desai also examined the relationship of jointness with property, education, and stay in urban area. He thus tried to examine the correlates of jointness. He observed that common ownership of property helped to maintain jointness but it did not cause jointness. Here he distinguished between correlation and causal relation. He found a correlation between property and jointness, but clarified that property was not the cause of jointness. He could not observe any correlation between jointness and education, as the level of education of all families was very low. As regards relationship between urbanization and jointness, he observed that duration of urban stay of the family had an
urbanizing influence. Longer stay in urban area did not dissolve jointness. The families who had settled in urban place for long time had highest and higher degree of jointness. Desai's distinction between correlation and causation is a finer distinction required to be made in scientific procedure of research. He chose the survey method because he emphasized on qualitative as well as quantitative analysis and was inclined towards scientific methodology of research.

Thus, the belief in desirability of joint living was found to be quite widespread in Mahuva. Moreover, the process of the family dynamics, from joint to nuclear, and from nuclear to joint, still continued and when the idea of joint living was cherished, this process of dynamics might result more frequently and might facilitate the development of jointness.

Kinship obligations were found important in maintaining and facilitating jointness. Desai asked the question: whether the relatives expected to help them in certain matters, and from whom they expected help. Kinship relations between near consanguines were found to be stronger (e.g., between parents and children, siblings, and first cousins.) While looking at the circle of relatives with whom the relations were to be maintained during the life-cycle of the individual, it appeared that the circle of relatives was contracting and therefore many people complained that the warmth of feeling and regard was not found as in the past.

Households were analyzed in terms of continuity of members. The residential separation was found not to change the orientation of separating members. When
much before the theory of modernization became popular. Desai not only used the theory of modernization but also challenged the unilinear or convergence theory of modernization much before other scholars thought on that line.

A Comparative Analysis of Family in South-East Asia

Desai's fourth publication, "The family Research in South-East Asia: An Approach", was published in a report on the proceedings of the XVII International Conference on the Family in 1966 held at Delhi. It was reprinted in his book, *The Craft of Sociology and Other Essays* (1981c). Here Desai noted that the extended family system was commonly found in all countries of South East Asia and was believed to be changing due to industrialization. Following the convergence theory of modernization, social scientists and reformers believed that industrialization destroyed the joint family system and facilitated the nuclear family found in America and England. Desai questioned this belief on the basis of investigations made in India, which showed that the joint family was not destroyed in India. Even in Japan the joint family continued to exist after its industrialization. In India before independence, separation of brothers after father's death was quite common and was also socially approved. But the separated brothers did not move far away from their family of orientation and continued the same family occupation. These nuclear households wished to grow into joint households. So, residentially they were separated but potentially and actually they were joint in their behaviour.
After Second World War and more after independence, due to increased industrialization, brothers and sons moved out from their family of orientation to earn and live in urban place. There was migration from rural environment to urban environment. In urban areas they took to different occupations. At the same time there was also an increase in the movement from one urban area to another urban area due to availability of employment opportunities. Migration however, did not cut off an individual from his family of orientation because they retained their interest in property and fulfilled family obligations. They also cherished the ideal of the joint family. Thus residentially nuclear households came into existence but it may not be nuclear in terms of values, attitudes and behavior of its members. Thus Desai challenged the convergence theory of modernization as early as 1964 and thus his contribution to family research is very significant.

According to Desai, the family cannot be equated with common residence. It should be distinguished from a household. It is a system of relationships with rights, duties and norms that the members try to live up to. In Mahuva he studied varieties of households and classified families on the basis of its degree of jointness. The jointness was studied with reference to its manifestations in terms of common residence, ownership of property and mutual obligations.

According to Gore (1965), in order to study changes in the family, we should study the changing attitudes and role definitions instead of studying the percentage of joint and nuclear households. This would remove the confusion between household and family. Gore also studied its relationship with other institutions and its impact on other systems in society. Accordingly, due to lack of dependence of the family on other
institutions, the family was not much affected by industrialization and new political systems. The existence of old and new family along with other institutions raised a question about the consequences for one another. Would it contribute to their existence, destruction or irrelevance? Gore raised this question and Desai answered this in his Mahuva study.

**Study of Family Planning Programme in Amreli District**

After setting up the Centre at Surat, Desai undertook policy related studies for two reasons: (a) by necessity, i.e., for survival of the Centre, and (b) it was in consonance with his own ideological inclinations. He undertook a survey of primary schools in tribal areas in Gujarat to guide and give a feedback to the government about its policy in the field of education. He was also involved in the project to devise the policy of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Similarly, he undertook a research project on the family planning programme in Amreli District in Saurashtra, assigned by the District Panchayat to Desai’s Centre. A report on this project was his fifth writing related to the family. This report was written in Gujarati and submitted to District Panchayat of Amreli in 1969, but was not published. When Anil Desai, the District Development Officer (DDO) of Amreli asked I. P. Desai to do this research, he raised three questions in his letter to Desai and wanted him to find answers: (1) How many children were considered to be desirable by the acceptors as well non-acceptors of family planning in Amreli District? (2) What is the opinion of people about the family planning programme? And, (3) what is the opinion of leaders in matters of family planning?
The District Panchayat believed that the people in Amreli District did not accept the family planning programme and therefore the DDO of Amreli District was concerned to know the reasons, so that necessary changes could be introduced to make the programme acceptable in future. The Government had fixed a target to be achieved and when they could not achieve the target it was understood as failure of the programme, and people were blamed for being uneducated, and lacking knowledge, and understanding about family planning. Desai did not approve of this idea and criticized their way of thinking. He pointed out that it was incorrect to measure the success or failure of a programme in terms of statistical figures. This shows that though he used statistics he knew its limitations as a sociologist. Moreover, he believed that the programme designed without considering the socio-cultural beliefs of people might fail to achieve success. Desai distinguished between ‘family planning’ and ‘family planning programme’. He said that people’s idea about the desired number of children was related to their socio-cultural beliefs. Giving knowledge about various family planning methods, or explaining the benefits of small family, or explaining the national problem of population explosion did not change their beliefs and ideas about family planning. He said that the family planning programme seemed to have been formulated without considering people’s beliefs.

Desai noted some general beliefs of people: (1) to have children was decided by nature, (2) childlessness was considered a bad omen, and (3) a man without son was believed to be nirvansh (without lineage). Therefore, people desired sons as well as daughters. These beliefs were relevant to the family planning programme. Therefore, those who had more sons than daughters accepted family planning.
Desai prepared a questionnaire and grouped the questions into four parts. The first part included questions relating to the social background of people; the second part, questions about who took the decision about family planning and who were considered to be relevant for execution of that decision; the third part, reasons for accepting or not accepting the family planning; and the forth part, questions about the actual experience of the various family planning methods. As desired by the DDO, the project covered four talukas of Amreli District: Amreli, Dhari, Babra, and Rajula. A total of 360 individuals were selected for the study. It included 120 men and 120 women who had accepted family planning, and 60 men and 60 women who did not accept family planning. Here he created a controlled group and a non-controlled group. Two groups with different characteristics were studied for the purpose of comparison. Men were generally interviewed at the place of their work, and women in their homes when men were out of their homes.

Desai found that, irrespective of the economic condition of the people, men desired to have more number of sons than daughters and a minimum of three children. Women desired more number of children than men, and even more number of sons compared to men. This certainly affected the number of children born to them. Their desire for children was associated with the usefulness of children in their old age. The majority in the sample looked to their sons for help and support in old age. According to Desai, acceptance of family planning at later age, i.e., after having more number of children, was a rational behavior. Their decision was guided by socio-cultural beliefs and these beliefs did not hinder family planning. Therefore, the programmers should have thought of fitting their programme in accordance with the socio-cultural beliefs of people.
Those who did not accept family planning were not opposed to the idea of the family planning. But they wanted to have more children, particularly enough number of sons.

Then Desai examined the question: if people were not against family planning, why was the programme not successful? What prevented them from accepting family planning? He examined whether they had knowledge about the family planning programme. People were asked about the goals of the programme. People saw the economic side of the programme. It was not seen as a programme for happy life or a programme oriented to better life for individuals. Therefore, the slogan used by the government “Small family, Happy family”, was not successful. Here Desai observed a changed behavior without change in their traditional beliefs. Economically poor people accepted family planning for economic reasons, and economically better people accepted family planning for satisfying their desire for mobility. It was an adaptive response to changed circumstances to provide better opportunities to their sons.

Desai examined factors related to execution of the family planning programme to find out whether they were related to success or failure of the programme. His data suggested that people did not have enough knowledge about Primary Health Centres. Men thought that Primary Health Centres were meant for women alone. It could be due to the predominance of women family planning workers, and the only man associated with the primary health center was the doctor. Women came to know about the family planning methods through Primary Health Centres, whereas men learnt about it from known people. The Primary Health Centres did not give proper information. Health workers were not interested in their work, they were frequently transferred, and
programmers often changed the programme. Therefore, they could not maintain necessary relations with others outside the centre. All these factors influenced the programme.

In this research, Desai arrived at a conclusion that the number of sons, and not the total number of children, was an important factor for acceptance of family planning. People with two or three sons had no problem in accepting family planning. Since the Indian cultural tradition gave importance to son, acceptors as well as non-acceptors of family planning were concerned about the number of sons they had. Thus, according to Desai, cultural tradition did not hinder family planning. The idea had penetrated into the minds of people so much that they wanted their children to accept family planning. Moreover, the majority of men believed that human effort could certainly bring change in the situation. This was a positive belief and it facilitated family planning. Thus, Desai observed a change in the past socio-cultural beliefs facilitating family planning.

This was a different kind of analysis of the family planning programme. Desai's research talent is reflected in his analysis of the data of his research project. His scientific approach is visible clearly in this research. His mastery over the use of questionnaire technique and survey analysis is also visible in this research. His deep understanding of social reality as a sociologist is visible in the final analysis of data and conclusion. He considered all aspects related to family planning programme in this study: the people, the government officials working in Primary Health Centres and the most important, the socio-cultural environment in Amreli District. He described the entire procedure of sampling used in this research. I do not think many researches on family planning were
carried out from all these angles, i.e., the individuals, the Primary Health Centres, and socio-cultural environment in which the programme was executed. It is unfortunate that this report has not been published. Many people therefore do not know the merits of this research report. Desai is known for raising questions. He also answered them. This was his method of rigorously examining the results of research.

A Comparative Analysis of Joint Family

Desai’s article, “A Note on The Family Research” was published, in D. Narayan’s (ed.) book, *Explorations in the Family and Other Essays* (1975). By this time the unilinear modernization theory was questioned. In this article he reviewed family research in India and proposed a new approach to family studies. He believed that with this new approach it would be possible to find out the type of family, which would emerge under the impact of industrialization in India. Social scientists and reformers believed that industrialization destroys joint family, giving rise to nuclear family found in the west. However, researchers had shown that the joint family continued to exist in India and Japan, which had created a doubt about the relationship between industrialization and the type of family.

While examining the history of the joint family in India, Desai noted that residential separation of brothers was socially accepted in the past. These brothers were residentially I but otherwise continued to belong to joint family and followed the same occupation. After independence, however, migration to urban areas increased due to
availability of increased earning opportunities in urban areas. This accelerated the process of splitting of joint households in rural and urban areas. Empirical studies indicated that they were not cut off from their kin and caste groups, religious groups and villages due to migration or splitting. Researches in India had questioned the belief that the joint family was disappearing in India. Generally, family is understood as a residential group and on that basis the joint family was distinguished from nuclear family. In India, the census data provided evidence about family. In the census, households were understood as families and therefore their evidence regarding the weakening of the joint family could not be accepted. Later, household was distinguished from family, and family was understood as a system of relationship with rights, obligations and norms attached to them.

Generally, the family is studied in terms of residential group. Desai suggested a complementary approach. Here one has to keep in mind that the nuclear household is controlled by joint family norms as well as the fact that the type of residence affects the husband-wife and parent-child relationships. We have to search for the elements of nuclearity in joint households and elements of jointness in nuclear households, for which it is necessary to study the dynamics of family. We have to find out how people with a certain relationship interact with one another in definite situations and occasions. We may find that nuclear households could be joint in terms of rights, obligations, and norms. While following this approach, we observe interactions between two persons with specific relationship (e.g., husband and wife, or parents and children). This will make it possible to find out whether the sentiments are joint or nuclear. Once we identify the elements of jointness or nuclearity with reference to particular relationships, we can
extend our observations with reference to other institutions such as property and marriage. In the same way, the family could be related to other phenomena such as industrialization, urbanization, occupation, education etc. This was the suggestion made by Desai to find out whether the family is joint or nuclear. Moreover, he pointed out that the disappearance of joint family could not be understood as its replacement by nuclear family. It is also possible to have a mixed type of family. The elements of nuclearity and jointness might be found in both types of families. In order to describe the emergent type of family as joint, nuclear or a combination of both, it is necessary to add the element of nuclearity in our observation. This sounds good and something new and different from what other scholars have talked about, but it is not clear how to find out the preference and prevalence of either nuclear or joint type of elements in a household. What about the situation in which you get an evidence of the presence and preference for both the types of elements?

Concluding Remarks

Desai raised two issues regarding joint family in India. One issue was the definition of the joint family, and the other issue was about the future of the joint family. These issues are still debatable. The issue of the future of joint family is related to the impact of industrialization on joint family. It is difficult to find a complete definition of joint family, which can take care of all aspects of joint family. A. M. Shah has recommended that we should clearly distinguish between family and household (1974). He pointed out the complexities involved in the study of family and very rightly
recommended that the household should be the unit of observation in family studies. The
distinction between family and household to my mind refers to a distinction made in
Gujarati language between *ghar* and *kutumb*. Many other scholars did use the term
household earlier, including Desai, but have not been able to successfully explain the
complexities involved in family studies and pin point the significance of the use of the
term ‘household’. Desai rightly pointed out that the family exists in the minds of an
individual. It gets expressed in mutual obligations among the members of a family,
whereas the household is a concrete fact, which can be observed and studied by a scholar.
Desai suggested a new approach to study family but he did not clarify how to observe and
decide the level of nuclearity or jointness in a family. Moreover, you may find both the
elements co-existing in a family. Thus there is a problem of how to apply the approach
suggested by Desai in the family studies. In the Mahuva study, he attempted to rigorously
analyze the composition of joint family and the jointness of the joint family. But his
typology became very clumsy and confusing. The typology devised by Desai does not
seem to be practical. Unfortunately, no other scholar seems to have used his method of
analysis in family study in India.

Of Desai’s six writings on family, his first paper on caste and family does not
involve any first-hand information. It is about his reaction to Gardner Murphy’s views on
Indian joint family. In this paper, Desai has combined the logic of the functional analysis,
the theory of change, and the theory of stratification. Using the logic of functional
analysis he pointed out that whenever the institutions of caste and joint family experience
inconsistencies within themselves and in their relations with other subsystems of society,
they have adapted to remove the inconsistencies by modifying themselves and thereby
contributing to smooth functioning of the entire system. He challenged the then existing theory of social change. According to that theory, which was mainly influenced by the theory of diffusion, contact can initiate change. Desai disagreed with this theory and pointed out that contact does not initiate change, but may push change if it is compatible with change. He used the theory of stratification in discussing education as a means of social change. He rightly said that the impact of education differs according to the strata from which the students come and according to the school they attend.

In his second paper Desai has pointed out the loopholes in the data about joint family provided by the census authorities and their interpretation of the data. His major contributions in this paper are two: (1) the household, which is the unit of Census enumeration, is not the family as such, and (2) statistically, the number of members living in the households of a particular type is a more real indicator than the number of households of that type.

Desai's third publication, the study of family in Mahuva is one of the first empirical studies on family in India. The data was collected through survey. The survey involved closed as well as open interviews with the help of an interviewer's guide. A team of five investigators worked in the field for about nine months, spreading over three years. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it is not only based on systematically conducted empirical investigation but it is also quite rigorous in its methodology.
In his fourth publication, Desai has used comparative approach. He compared the impact of industrialization on joint family in India with similar impact on family in Japan and arrived at a conclusion that industrialization has not disintegrated the joint family in India as well as in Japan. He challenged the unilinear theory of modernization.

Desai's fifth writing though unpublished, is an evaluatory research report of the family planning programme in Amreli District. The data is collected with the help of an interview schedule. The report said that people were not against family planning. The family planning programme had not taken into consideration the social norms and evaluated the programme on the basis of statistical figures and said that the programme was not successful. As I have pointed out earlier, this research report reflects Desai's talent as a researcher and as a sociologist.

In the last paper on family, Desai suggested a new approach to family study in India. He pointed out that the elements for nuclearity can exist in a joint household and the elements of jointness can exist in a nuclear household. But he has not clearly shown how to identify these elements in actual studies. He made an important point that we should not assume that joint family is replaced by nuclear family. The emergent family form in India can be a combination of nuclear and joint family and it can be a new form of family with its distinct characteristics.

from this, his Ph.D. students considered family as an important aspect in their research. For example, while studying students, they studied the family background of students and its influence on students. Moreover, his influence is visible in the method of research used by his students. Most of his students have used questionnaire and interview guide for data collection. Thus Desai's influence on his students is visible in the selection of topic of research as well as in their choice of methods of research.

Joint family has remained a topic of research for scholars in modern India, though it is considered to be a difficult one. As pointed out by Patricia Uberoi (2000) the issue of Hindu joint family is rooted in the intellectual climate of modern India. Another issue is pluralism. The fact is that India is a plural society and pluralism is also found in the field of family. In future, perhaps, it may be rewarding to study Indian family with reference to gender and the social inequalities in family and society.