

## UNIT 5

### SELECTION OF TOPIC:

Choosing your topic is the first step in the research process. Be aware that selecting a good topic may not be easy. It must be narrow and focused enough to be interesting, yet broad enough to find adequate information. A wrong choice would result in regret and disappointment. Historical research could be on any one of the following aspects: 1. Addition of new data. 2. New interpretation of known data 3. Subordination of the data to a principle. A scholar has to make sure that he should discover or unearth or find out something new, the hidden historical truth, unknown until his time and no one else had researched into that area.

- Choose a topic that you are interested in! The research process is more relevant if you care about your topic.
- Narrow your topic to something manageable.
  - If your topic is too broad, you will find too much information and not be able to focus.
  - Background reading can help you choose and limit the scope of your topic.
- Review the guidelines on topic selection outlined in your assignment. Ask your professor or TA for suggestions.
- Refer to lecture notes and required texts to refresh your knowledge of the course and assignment.
- Talk about research ideas with a friend. She/he may be able to help focus your topic by discussing issues that didn't occur to you at first.
- Think of the who, what, when, where and why questions:
  - **WHY** did you choose the topic? What interests you about it? Do you have an opinion about the issues involved?

- **WHO** are the information providers on this topic? Who might publish information about it? Who is affected by the topic? Do you know of organizations or institutions affiliated with the topic?
- **WHAT** are the major questions for this topic? Is there a debate about the topic? Are there a range of issues and viewpoints to consider?
- **WHERE** is your topic important: at the local, national or international level? Are there specific places affected by the topic?
- **WHEN** is/was your topic important? Is it a current event or an historical issue? Do you want to compare your topic by time periods?

#### **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRITICISM**

External Criticism: It has been said that the external criticism is the study of external characteristic of a source, like ascertaining whether it is genuine or forged, whether additions or deletions are made in subsequent times & whether the authorship and the data as given in it are true. The nature of external criticism is thus preliminary as it studies only the outside or the external form of the document. It deals with the critical investigation of authorship, date handwriting and the source of the documents.

Internal criticism is applied to examine the internal value of a document whether the contents given in it are reliable or not. It consists of two parts, positive and negative.

#### **ARRANGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF FACTS**

Arrangements of facts can be effected on a geographical basis or chronological basis or on a topical basis. The most popular criteria for the arrangement of historical data is that of chronology V.A.Smith's Akbar the Great Moghul is based on the chronological basis. In a chronological kind of arrangement events are depicted in the order of succession but this cuts across the different trends. When the arrangement is effected on topical basis, different themes can be dealt with distinctly but the order of sequence will be ignored. The first volume of the

Cambridge History of India is based on various topics. However in this method there is always a possibility that the historian may lose the fundamental historical essence of change through time.

### **ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH WORK:**

A well-developed research paper is organized

- It is focused on your thesis.
- It uses parts of the sources to support parts of the thesis.
- It uses multiple sources in a single section, because it is drawing ideas and information from various places to support an original idea.
- The same sources will be cited repeatedly in different sections, because different facts or ideas from those sources are relevant to different points you want to make.