31. THE THESIS

31.1 Fruit of Research

The thesis is the culmination of research endeavour, end of the journey. It is the fruit of original research. There is no final form in thesis writing. So the research scholar should find out the requirements of his department. While the content of the thesis is important, the presentation of the argument in a standard form is a necessity. Precise writing and proper presentation are essential. Normally the researcher is expected to go through three drafts of his thesis.[1] Revision and rewriting of the thesis must be done with "a kind of Olympian detachment".[2] The size of the thesis must be commensurate with the nature of the research topic.[3]

31.2 THE DRAFTS

31.2.1 The First Draft

The researcher must know that there should be more than one draft of the thesis. The objective of the first draft is comprehensiveness and fullness of facts. It is "a recording of the spontaneous out-pouring of the ideas".[4] It has to be arranged in a logical sequence. In the first draft it may not be possible to arrange the 'thorny matters evidence'[5] and emphasis may not be well arranged and effectively expressed. It may disclose defects in the tentative organization of the draft. The draft may be prepared section-wise if not for the complete thesis so that additional evidence could be included as and when available. Citations may be placed in the draft without postponing it to the final draft. Avoid crowding pages and leave enough room for insertions and other changes. Gaps may be left, properly labeled, to accommodate additional material. Avoid excessive quotations at this stage. Note your views and opinions about the stated evidence. Don't bother over style and polish of writing. It would be a good idea to show the draft to your guide so that he will have an opportunity to give his suggestions to improve the same.

31.2.2 The Second Draft

The first draft has to be revised and rewritten. The researcher must be more careful and vigilant at this stage. He must re-visit the draft critically in order to 1) verify whether all the facts are properly used and logically arranged. Unwanted, irrelevant ideas, however attractive they

may be, have to be weeded out; 2) Check up whether chapterisation is sequential and narration flows naturally; 3) ensure whether due weight has been given to facts in appropriate place and repetition of facts and ideas must be restrained; 4) ascertain whether references to sources are provided for; 5) add a tentative list of appendices with suitable cross-references; and 6) attempt at reaching tentative conclusions. The second draft may be considered as the pre-final draft.

31.2.3 The Third Draft

The final draft is the crowning climax, an end-product, epilogue and the destination of the journey of the research. It is an occasion to verify, scrutinise and revise, reconstruct and polish the draft. Necessary and appropriate corrections can be carried out at this stage. Revising and rewriting of the final draft should be done from the reader-cum-reviewer's point of view. It must be faultless and flawless and the matter is presented cogently and coherently. The usage of grammar must be thoroughly checked. Scope for further research can be indicated at appropriate places. Whether answers are given to all the question raised may be finalized. The researcher must concentrate on findings, conclusions and contribution to knowledge. He must finally check up, from introduction to conclusion including pagination, verification and self-criticism. The researcher is advised to go patiently through the draft thrice before giving it for final typing and binding. There is no use going through the draft in haste and repenting at leisure!

31.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is general arrangement or planning of research project. It is the planned sequence of the entire process involved in conducting the research study. It refers to the formulation of research efforts. It helps to translate the general scientific model into a practical research operation. It is the plan, structure and strategy of historical investigation. In short, research design is a tentative blue-print. There is no such thing as an ideal design. However, a good research design should satisfy the following four conditions: 1) Objectivity; 2) Reliability; 3) Validity; and 4) Generalisation.

31.4 RESEARCH FORMAT

The research design format will have the following items: 1) Research title in brief. 2) Main purpose of the study. 3) Critical appraisal of previous studies. 4) Statement of the problem or hypothesis. 5) Scope in terms of time, resource and other limitations. 6) Specific

objectives of the study. 7) Definition of terms. 8) Data collection. 9) Analysis, synthesis and interpretation of data. 10) Conclusions. 11) Suggestions for further research. 12) Documentation and Bibliography. 13) Synopsis and summary of the research report.

31.5 MAJOR PARTS

Generally, the format of the thesis consists of three major parts: 1) The Preliminaries; 2) The Text; and 3) The Reference Materials. The preliminaries which precede the text refer to the:

Title Page

Invariably the first page of the thesis is left blank. The next page is the ***'title page'***. This page contains a) the name of the research topic on the top; b) the name of the researcher in the middle; c) course requirement (eg. 'A Thesis submitted to Madurai Kamaraj University in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History) just below the name of the candidate; and d) the name of department to which the thesis is to be submitted and the date of submission at the bottom. Page number is not given to the title page. The topic must be in capital letters, single-spaced, centered and underlined; if it is more than one line then the lines must be grouped like an inverted pyramid.( ).

Preface

The preface, often used synonymously with forward, contains a) the reason why the work was undertaken; b) the scope of the subject; c) the circumstances under which the particular topic was chosen; d) the methodology adopted; and e) acknowledgement. Mention briefly the previous research done in the same field; the contributions helped your research and those who permitted you to include their contributions in your work. Be simple, humble and restrained.

Table of Contents

This includes the major divisions of the thesis, viz., Preface; Table of Contents; List of Abbreviations; Chapters; Glossary; Appended Items such as maps, charts, tables, photo-plates etc; and Index, if necessary. The heading TABLE OF CONTENTS in capitals is centered at the top of the page.

The Text

The text is the main body of the thesis. It contains the introductory chapter followed by other chapters. In the introduction the problem of research and how it was tackled is spelled out. This 'take-off' chapter

must be interesting enough to arouse the curiosity of the reader. It also deals with the scope of research; delimitation of the problem; definition of terms; review of literature; enumeration and estimation of source; limitation, if any; plan of the thesis; hypothesis formed and methodology followed. Other chapters contain the results of research. These chapters seek to "find the answers posed in introduction". Each chapter represents a major theme in the thesis. Each chapter, written cogently and logically, must be short, focused and meaningful. The concluding chapter is an answer to all the questions raised in the text of the thesis with an indication to further research in the same field of specialization. The ***reference materials*** include Appendix; Tables, Charts, Maps etc; and Index.

31.6 CHECKLIST FOR GOOD THESIS

Thesis is the channel of communicating the research results. A good thesis does this efficiently and effectively. Whether your thesis is good can be tested against the following checklist: 1) Have you clearly stated the objective of the study, the nature of the problem and the methods and techniques adopted? 2) Have you collected, selected and used all the relevant sources? 3) Does the thesis present the logical analysis, synthesis and interpretation of historical facts? 4) Is the thesis prepared strictly in accordance with the requirements of composition. 5) Does the thesis solve the problem, show originality and contribute to the knowledge in the field of specialization? 6) Is the thesis attractive, neat, clean and interesting to read? 7) Is the thesis larger and greater than the contribution of parts? 8) Have you succinctly summarized the conclusions of the study. 9) Are the prefixes and suffixes in order? 10) Is the format of the thesis in accordance with the requirements of the history department / institution concerned?

31.7 COMPUTER AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

31.7.1 Electronic Computation

We are living in an Age of Information Technology and Electronic Communication. Electronic devices, especially the computers, have become omnipresent, all pervasive. Computer symbolizes modern miracle of computation. Computers are used in every walk of life and research is no exception. Today's researcher is endowed with the opportunity and capacity to use the computer to store, analyze and retrieve an amazing array of facts, ideas and information so crucial to research. A student of research who embarks on an exciting journey of research can use computer with great advantage.

A computer, as its name indicates, is a computing device. This electronically operated miracle machine is capable of receiving, storing, manipulating and yielding desired information in instructed forms by a clic of the mouse! Speed, diligence, storage, accuracy and automation are the chief characteristics of a computer.

31.7.2 Applications

Computer is an electronic tool and its use lies in its application. At present, computers are used for various purposes. They are used for numeric as well as non-numeric applications. Educational, commercial, banking, financial, management, transport, research and development and several other organizations are increasingly using computers in their day-to-day work.

31.7.3 Role in Research

The role of computers in research is increasingly appreciated since it expedites research work, reduce human drudgery and enhance the quality of research activity. Researchers in history and other social sciences have realized the inevitable importance of electronic computers. Research students can, with some effort, acquire necessary skills in computer data analysis such as 1) data organization and coding; 2) storing the data; 3) selecting suitable software package; 4) using appropriate techniques; and 5) executing computer programmes. In the words of computer wizard ***Bill Gates*** "If you are twenty-five today and not comfortable with computers, you risk being ineffective in almost any kind of work you pursue".[6]

31.7.4 Multimedia

Multimedia is a boon to researchers. ***Media*** is used for presentation of information. ***Unimedia*** like a book or a stereo system can present information by using only text media and sound media respectively. But a ***multimedia*** device can be used to present information in amazingly different ways. For example, a history book as a multimedia device has the unique advantage of having both text and diagrams and therefore can present data much more effectively and in excellent quality by using text, maps, graphics and images. Illustrative diagrams can be easily drawn and used. In the multimedia system the media used for the purpose of storage, access and transmission of data are 1) Text; 2) Graphics; 3) Animation; 4) Audio; and 5) Video.

Multimedia Applications

Multimedia applications are manifold. The capability of computers to handle different types of applications and users is incredible. Historical research is an area that can benefit a lot by using multimedia device. There are many multimedia applications that directly or indirectly contribute to better history teaching, learning and research mechanisms. For instance, ***multimedia books*** using audio-video and animation will facilitate better understanding of the subject mater covered in the book. These books also provide a very effective way of searching for specific facts in a wide variety of ways. Several reference books such as encyclopedias, dictionaries etc are made available on CD-ROMs, which allow users to access the information they need quickly. Many research journals and magazines are also published in electronic / digital form so that researchers can access and print only those articles or portions thereof in which they are interested.

Digital Library is a repository of large information in digital form allowing multimedia users to search and access data of their interest from it. Such a virtual library remains open round the clock allowing users to use it at their own convenient time. ***Network Multimedia*** can be used to access the library from remote locations. This overcomes the distance and time limitations of current conventional libraries. ***Multimedia Presentation*** in a variety of forms (Text, Graphics, Animation, Audio-Video), can be used to better explain the thesis to the guide and examiners. Besides, it helps in making a presentation more effective and interesting. ***Authorship Applications*** deal with editing and composing a document. The participant can access the document either synchronously or asynchronously.

31.7.5 History and Computers

1. Initial Application

The application of computer programmes to historical research is nothing new. The need for quantification of historical data had long been recognized and acted upon even before the advent of electronic computers. In the 1950s, ***R.R.Palmer,*** in his study of *Atlantic Revolution* used comparative statistics and showed in relative percentages that there were more émigrés from the American Revolution than from the French. At that time, this data was computed with pencil and paper by simple long division. In the 1960s, the demographers attempted to involve computer in their studies. In the 1970s there was a backlash from a few historiographers who revived qualitative history. But with the arrival of

the 'Age of Information Technology' in the 1980s computers came to be increasingly used in historical research.

2. Quantitative History

To start with, ***quantitative history*** had produced a number of important advances. It exposed and exploded the old myths about population increase in the 18th century Europe. The precise figures about the numbers involved in the African slave trade was successfully established. No wonder the computer with its new facilities, and in its many convenient forms, captured the imagination of the generation of the 1980s. Historians who worked with computers had a feeling of sailing along with scientists, social planners and business executives! Still, much important historical research was carried on without the use of computers. Fragmentary information gathered from a wide range of archives stood in the way of the rational compilation of a credible database which inhibited the use of computers.

3. Electronic Data Bank

In the 1990s whole texts were fed into ***electronic data bank.*** This led to the publication of national texts of the 19th century like the ***History and computing*** edited by ***Peter Denley and Deian Hopkin.*** With the texts in computer it was possible to analyze medieval historical texts. In this way, the most famous of all medieval documents, ***Domesday Book,*** was computerized. Then it became possible for the search for words in specified contexts and display on the computer screen the pieces of text in which they appear and sorted according to pre-defined criteria. Thus, selected texts may be amended, supplemented or statistical values may be abstracted for analysis, displaying the results in tables, graphics and maps as required.[8]

4. Data Analysis

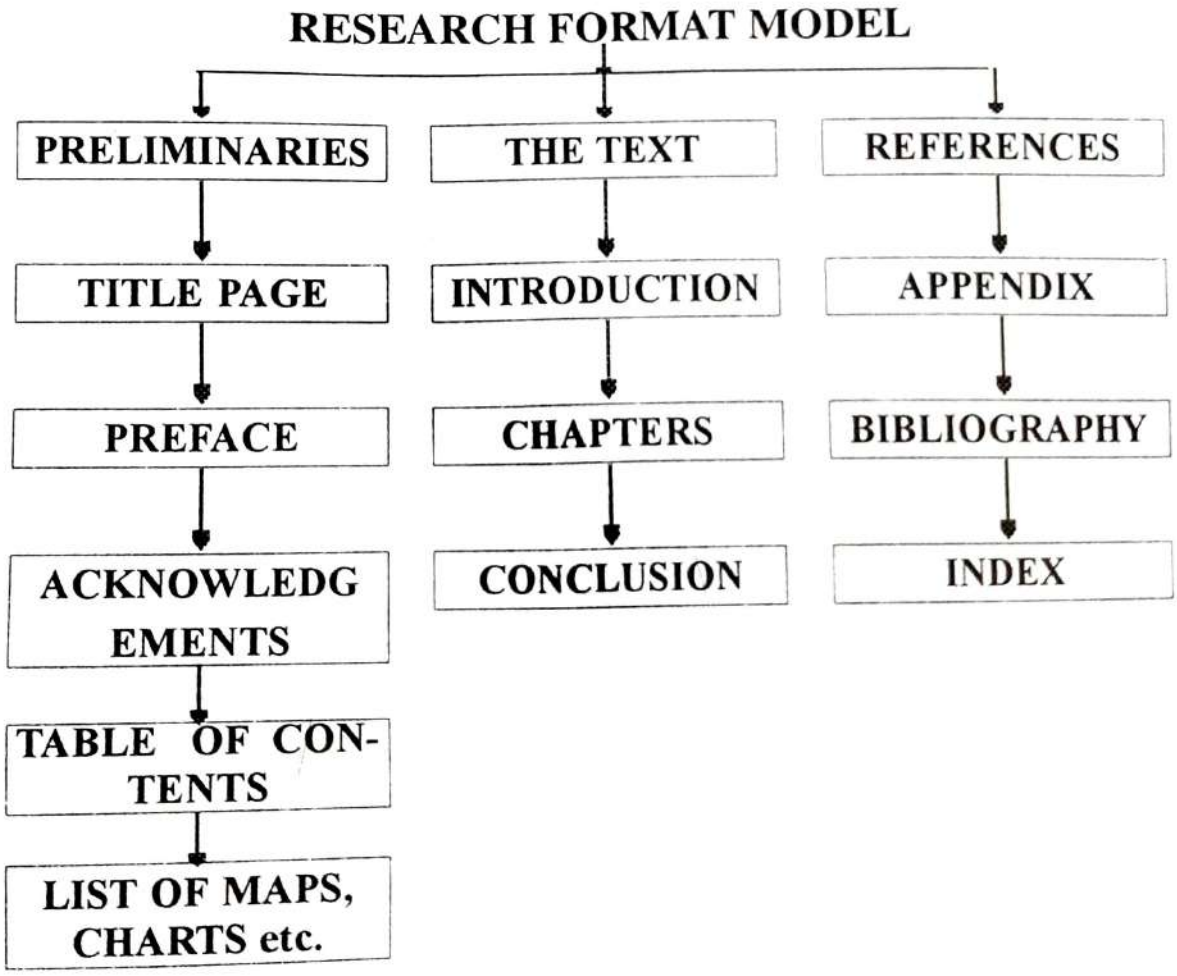
Today data analysis inevitably inclines towards statistical analysis, diagrammatic representation and computational techniques and methods. Now it is possible to compute research activities to minute segments. The computation in its numerical representation is a boon to researchers. Study of sculpture, architecture, iconography, pre-historic and proto-historic sources can now be displayed with amazing visual effect. Histograms and pie-diagrams are possible through computers. Facts can be effectively represented by means of percentages. Data can be classified on the basis of variables like typology. Chronology, statistical analysis of the rule of different dynasties and dynastic regimes, classification of documents etc can be easily carried out through computers and represented by table, diagrams and visual representation.[9]

Type	Methods	Techniques
Achieval / Library Research	1. Analysis of historical methods. 2. Evaluation of documents	1. Recording of Notes, Content Analysis, Tape and Film Listening and Analysis. 2. Statistical compliations and manipulations

31.8 FINAL FORM

The thesis in the final form may either be plainly typed or typed on stencils or computer printed. Before sending the thesis for typing or printing it should be carefully edited. Editing is essential because it 1) keeps the thesis free from grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and mistakes of punctuation; 2) gives correct references and footnotes; and 3) ensures uniformity in giving references, quotations and citations. Bond paper should be used. Electronic or computer typing ensures best results. Utmost attention should be paid in checking the page proofs and the thesis collated[10] before the thesis is bound. Thus the thesis is the rich reward for the researcher's search for historical truth.

31.9 RESEARCH FORMAT



REFERENCES

1. The objective of the first draft is comprehensiveness and fullness of facts. The second draft is improved both in the form and the languages by considerable trimming and pruning. The final draft is the finished product, authoritative, authentic and convincing.
2. V.Agnihotri, Techniques of Social Research, New Delhi, 1980, p.91.
3. There are no hard and fast rules about the length of the thesis. The optimum size of the Ph.D. thesis may be about 400 pages of typed material, around 80 to 90 thousand words.
4. V.Manickam, On History, Historiography and Method, Madras, 1991, p.264.
5. R.J.Shafer, A Guide to Historical Method, Illinois, 1971, p.177.
6. Bill Ghates, The Road Ahead, New York, 1995, p.258.
7. Pradeep K.Sinha, Functions of Computing, New Delhi, 2002, p.509-29.
8. Arthur Marwick, The Nature of History, Third ed., London, pp.175-182.
9. C.R.Kothari, Research Methodology, New Delhi, 2005, pp.370-73.
10. Collation refers to examination and comparison of the typed or printed copies of the thesis in order to find the differences between them and to ensure that pages are in proper sequence.