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**Book Review: Jayadeva Uyangoda, *Writing Research Proposals in the Social Sciences and Humanities: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Social Scientists' Association, 2010, ii + 135 pp., SLR 350, ISBN: 978-955-1772-68-0**

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“Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing”.

Benjamin Franklin

Suppose you are an undergraduate or a graduate student who is required to produce a dissertation/thesis as partial fulfilment of requirements for an academic degree. Initially, you get classroom training, complete or incomplete, on designing, conducting, and writing up research. What do you do next? You attempt to translate your classroom learnings into a practical research project keeping a certain deadline in mind. This task, you may find sometimes tedious, and demanding a good amount of both intellectual and physical labour. What do you do then? Two alternative courses of action: you may take it up as a challenge, which teaches your mind while touching your heart, for transforming lives of many thousands of people in this society, or you may withdraw from the entire process and give up reading for the academic degree in point. My long years' of experience as an academic advisor for those endeavouring to produce dissertations teaches that the failure or withdrawal on the part of the student starts at comprehensive review of literature which is based predominantly on journal articles. Many, mostly at graduate level, find it difficult to concentrate on deep reading, understanding, and summarizing such literature for subsequent discussions with one's own academic advisor and other academics. Consequently, this brings all good efforts the student had made in taking coursework to an end creating a 'lost hope' of completing the degree program. There are also those who attempt to shift back to coursework pointing out many reasons for making such a decision.

This book is a precise attempt of helping students and scholars at all levels with understanding cleanly the process of conducting a research project while sustaining their interest and passion for

bringing it to successful completion. Jayadeva Uyangoda, the author has profited from his illustrious academic career, particularly as a scientific researcher, prolific writer, and research advisor for students across many generations in penning this book for a wider audience with social science background. Interestingly, the book serves equally researchers who are passionate about infusing inter-disciplinarily flavour into their work. In recent years Sri Lankan state university system has shown a phenomenal interest in promoting high impact research in all kinds of sciences ranging from pure/natural to social. Coincidentally, the number of social science students opting to producing a dissertation at graduate level is on rise leading to creating the space for research-driven communities. By contrast, there has been a decreasing demand for producing a dissertation at undergraduate level when and where those undergraduates could complete the degree program by coursework exclusively. This phenomenon compels scholarly community to raise the question of the fewer propensities of 'Generation Y' people to delaying gratification as writing a dissertation consumes substantial amount of time and effort. Given these ground realities, Uyangoda's work symbolizes a well thought out process of addressing a certain key issues and concerns of academic researchers. All ten chapters contained in the book have dealt with sensitive topics and inappropriate behaviours of social science researchers.

Following a lucid explanation of what research and research proposal are all about, the author convincingly presents styles of formulating the research issue with underlying research questions thereof; i.e. what, why, and how questions and their implications for deriving objectives of the study and selection of research strategies subsequently. Drawing heavily upon the cutting-edge writing skills, the author focuses sharply on formulating hypotheses with a range of examples and developing strong arguments to claim disciplinary, policy, and social relevance of a piece of research. Needless to state, three forms of relevance harness the researcher's confidence of non-reinvention of the wheel as a result of his/her research undertaking. This has further been explained in the chapter on 'literature review' with special reference to its purpose, modus operandi, types, and presentation in the dissertation.

The author investigates three genres of theoretical approaches in the social sciences in Chapter seven while anatomizing 'methods' and 'methodology' in the two chapters that follow Chapter Seven. A remarkable distinction between methods and methodology has been brought to the fore in Chapter Nine addressing meticulously one of the common mistakes made by dissertation writers, i.e. wording the particular chapter as 'methodology' and presenting only 'methods'. This powerful distinction would undoubtedly revolutionize the perspectives of majority of scholarly community to highlight the difference between the two and promote undergraduate and master's (non-research degrees) level students to write only about methods vis-à-vis methodology in their dissertation. On a personal and subjective platform, this is the quintessential contribution of Uyangoda's book to forming research competencies in scholars, both current and prospective.

Admirably, the author has presented in detail epistemological and methodological traditions of conducting social science research in Chapter Nine. This would motivate researchers to employ and appreciate a variety of research traditions rather than confining themselves to one tradition in pursuit of exploring the reality of our social world. The author has set the space aside in the last chapter to elaborate (indicative) constituent elements of a research proposal and putting them together. The materials contained in this chapter provide scholars with a guide for arranging their initial research proposal.

In summary, the book has considerable strengths for the student as well as scholars who are occupied with a dual role, i.e. researcher and research advisor for others. It undoubtedly adds to expanding contours of human knowledge, conscious understanding, and experience of the art and science of conducting social science research. Overall, chapters are organized in a manner that even a novice on research space could digest the contents. The use of language in the book is articulate; the author has used his finest vocabulary like water gushing from a fountain. The author may add chapters on 'basic academic writing skills' and 'data analysis and interpretation' to the next edition of this valuable publication.

Let me conclude this review by quoting Robert Cormier: "The beautiful part of writing is that you do not have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, brain surgery".