

Book Review - 3

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Researching Geography: The Indian Context, London & New York, Routledge, pp xii + 285, price Rs. 895/-

This is the first comprehensive book on 'Research Methodology' with a geographical perspective written by two Indian authors, both senior professors with a rich experience of teaching and research in geography, the former at Panjab University, Chandigarh, and the latter at M. D. University, Rohtak, Haryana.

As mentioned in the preface, 'the book aims to acquaint students with, and train them in, the craft of carrying out geographical research'. In the process, the authors have tried to capture the needs of research students at different stages during the course of their research and responded to those needs in an effective manner. Though considered a Beginners Guide, in the opinion of this reviewer, the book is an elaborate presentation of research methods in geography, and could well be adopted as a standard reference book or a guide for M. Phil., Ph.D. students, embarking on research in geography. It presents a step-by-step account of the problems that confront a research student beginning with the selection of the area of research and writing of a proposal, and ending with the writing of a thesis, with well delineated intermediate stages. There is hardly any aspect of geographical research that is not touched upon in the volume.

Contents of the book: The volume is divided into three parts containing twelve chapters. One can imagine the thoroughness of the book, as it starts with 'What is geographic Perspective?', the first chapter, and ends with 'The Viva Voce', the last hurdle that a student faces before he gets the degree M. Phil., or Ph. D. in 12th chapter.

The part I of the book, called 'Laying the Foundation' has two chapters viz. 'What is Geographic Perspective' reminding the researcher of the geographical perspective, as the authors believe, and rightly so, that 'geographical research must be guided by spatial perspective'. 'Issues pertinent to a Geography thesis leaves hardly anything to the imagination of the researcher., as it enumerates themes like selection of an area of research, and choice of a supervisor formal enrolment and registration to research design, appropriate methods and management data to style of presentation and reference and bibliography, drawing a distinction between the two.

The part -'Traversing the Path: Data Management' claims a large space in the book, running into more than 150 pages, almost 60 percent of the length of the volume. The five chapters- Typology of Data, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Data Representation and Data Interpretation,

together involve the actual work in the field, library and laboratory, and could prove immensely useful to any research student entering the domain of geographical research. To give an idea of what these chapters contain one has only to look at the range of topics, relating to the collection of primary, secondary and tertiary data with various methods, like fieldwork, surveys, sampling with all its typology and attributes - all discussed with illustrations.

Data Analysis in the book comes for a special treatment that incorporates a variety of indices, some representing statistical techniques like correlation and regression to multivariate analysis including principal component and factor analysis, and others outlining various indices like index of concentration or dispersal, index of accessibility or index of areal association and the like. The merit of presenting these techniques is their illustrations with suitable examples taken from a geographical context. A large mass of reference material, reviewed in the text, an unusual but exceedingly useful feature, would certainly help the researcher trace the original source where a specific technique was thoughtfully applied for the first time. There is also a brief yet lucid discussion of cartography and diagrams with their suitability and significance either in deriving an inference or simply as an illustration. These include, among other things, visual symbols, classes and class intervals, several categories of diagrams and finally the use of Geographical Information System in cartography.. Research writing, specifically writing a thesis, giving tips about style of writing, including the sequence of arrangement in a conventional thesis, can be followed by any student without any

risk of appearing outdated. .To facilitate prompt and micro-level consultation, the book appends an index where one can find themes of one's interest without having to wade through the entire volume.

The book 'Researching Geography: The Indian Context' is the first book of its kind written by Indian authors. Written in a very lucid yet a clear style, delineating the steps that are usually followed in a degree-oriented research, the book is certain to prove an invaluable guide to research students in pursuit of their research for a Ph. D. or, a M. Phil. Degree. In fact, it could well be adopted as a textbook for the courses on Research Methodology in geography, offered by universities, all across the country. For university teachers teaching a course in Research Methodology, the book provides, in a single volume, well-documented and massively illustrated basic material, on which to build on.

This well-written, thoughtfully organized and well-illustrated book on Research Methodology, keeping in view the Indian context, is a contribution to research effort in geography in India, and is sure to find a place not only in the libraries of universities and geography departments across the country, in multiple copies, but moderately priced at Rs 875/- it may even prove to be a constant companion even with research students who will consult it as a lexicon of geographical research..

Highly recommended as an indispensable research guide-book for geography students.

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