



BOOK REVIEWS

PRESS AND MEDIA LAW MANUAL (2002). By Vidisha Barua. Universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd. Pp. xvii + 662. Price Rs. 575/-.

FROM THE now archaic printing technology of Guttenburg – developed in Germany in about 1450 – to the marvelous convergence of broadcasting, telecommunication – and information technologies of the day, the transformation of the media scenario is unbelievable and incomprehensible. Quick changes in technology make media law obsolete. So too law books. It is in this challenging context that Vidisha Barua, a lawyer turned journalist, is to be welcomed for her *Press and Media Law Manual* which is virtually an anthology of relevant statutes relating to media. An erudite introduction by Arun Jaitely, noted lawyer and former union law minister, besides being a gateway, gives a glimpse of imminent events and the efforts of the legal system to cope with it. The combat of the media with the power of the state, heralded by Hicky who launched the first Indian newspaper in 1780, has not subsided. Starting with the “notorious Regulations” of Governor General Wellesley, issued in 1790, the bulging Indian statute book is regularly trimmed, offloading obnoxious laws and instilling the spirit of the Constitution. Apart from a brief account of certain legal aspects, Barua has assumed the role of a compiler. Her wide spectrum encompasses a plethora of laws – starting from the 1867 Press and Regulation of Books Act to the Communication Convergence Bill of 2001. The fate of the Freedom of Information Act, 2002 clearly indicates the fate of this book: constant revision and updating. The Act, so vital to the effective functioning of a free press, was not notified; hence it did not come into effect. Now a revised Freedom of Information Bill is on the anvil. The luxuriant growth of the media in consonance with the complex development of technology is making legislation a complicated exercise. This offers enterprising researchers like Barua great opportunities.

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