



CHAKRAVARTI'S ALL INDIA SERVICE LAW DIGEST, 1950-1988
(3rd ed. 1988). By R.N. Misra. Hind Publishing House, Allahabad.
Pp. xxii + 1962. Price Rs. 400.

DIGESTS ARE intended to serve as essential tools for ascertaining the law particularly in legal systems where courts follow precedents and the principle of *stare decisis*, though the apex courts may modify or overrule their previous decisions in certain circumstances.¹ What a digest should be like has been explained by Walker² thus:

The modern Digests give brief synopses of all cases reported from the superior courts classified under recognized legal headings alphabetically arranged, and sub-heads analytically arranged, with numerous cross-references, and construed, previous cases discussed, followed, overruled, or otherwise commented on, and of words and phrases judicially defined or discussed. There are also normally alphabetical indexes of cases by the names of the parties.³

Unless this much is adhered to, digests may not serve their purpose. Consequently they have to be carefully planned and worked out in a systematic way. This would require both ability and industry, not a mechanical exercise. A good example of digests in contemplation is *The English and Empire Digest*—an authoritative and comprehensive treatise on the law as a whole.

India is perhaps the largest producer of digests in common law countries but it seems none of them has any juristic approach and satisfies fully the standards articulated by Walker. The book⁴ under review is no exception. This is not to say that Indian digests are a useless lot. Many of them are a systematic presentation of case law and serve as ready referencers facilitating especially the task of lawyers.⁵ This is true with the present work also.

The digest under review is a compilation mainly of case law relating to public services. It covers a period of 38 years from the commencement of the Constitution in 1950. There is no chapterisation or division in parts; it is a running presentation. The work begins with a brief introductory note on civil service, constitutional provisions, nature and tenure of government employment, and constitutional changes through amendments and judicial

1. See, e.g., *Bengal Immunity Co. Ltd. v. State of Bihar*, A.I.R. 1955 S.C. 661; *Scruttons Ltd. v. Midland Silicones Ltd.*, [1962] A.C. 446.

2. David N. Walker, *The Oxford Companion to Law* (1980).

3. *Id.* at 358.

4. K.P. Chakravarti, *All India Service Law Digest, 1950-1988* (3rd ed. 1988 by R.N. Misra).

5. See, e.g., *The Fifteen Years' Digest, 1951-1965*; *The Quinquennial Digest, 1981-1985*; *Labour Law Journal Digest, 1949-1965*.



interpretation. These important aspects have been covered in just 10 pages. Then follows, in a span of 1931 pages, an alphabetical presentation of various topics relating to public services. This is covered under 430 headings with numerous sub-headings. The last 20 pages are devoted to some cases mainly reported in 1988 under several headings and sub-headings. There are also notes at places pointing out the decisions overruled and followed. There is a list of abbreviations but no table of cases. Cross references are not given in a number of cases.

Despite the fact that some of the ingredients of a good digest are missing, *e.g.*, a uniform collection of summary statements of the points raised and decided in cases,⁶ the present work does not lose its importance and value. On account of its comprehensive coverage of case law under relevant headings and sub-headings it is a ready aid to lawyers and others who are interested in knowing at a glance what the law is in the area of public services. Its utility is further enhanced in view of the confusing state of the law of public services.⁷ Moreover, due to good printing and paper, the presentation does not strain the eyes. Keeping in view the size of the volume, the price is moderate.

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6. See *supra* note 3

7. See *S.P. Vasudeva v. State of Haryana*, A.I.R. 1975 S.C 2292 at 2295.

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