

S.N.D.T. WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY

LAW SCHOOL

INTERPRETATION OF STATUTES

TOPIC – INTERPRETATION OF STATUTES WITH REFERENCE
TO THE SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE

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INDEX

Sr. No.	Particulars	Page No.
1.	Interpretation of statutes with reference to subject matter and purpose	1
2.	Beneficial construction	2
3.	Restrictive construction	3
4.	Taxing Statutes	4
5.	Penal Statutes	11
6.	Mandatory and Directory provisions	16
7.	Enabling statutes	16
8.	Case laws	17
9.	Suggestion and Conclusion	21
10.	Reference	22

Interpretation of Statutes with reference to the subject matter and the purpose

Introduction:-

Interpretation means the art of finding out the true sense of an enactment by giving the words of the enactment their natural and ordinary meaning. It is the process of ascertaining the true meaning of the words used in a statute. The Court is not expected to interpret arbitrarily and therefore there have been certain principles which have evolved out of the continuous exercise by the Courts.

The object of interpretation of statutes is to determine the intention of the legislature conveyed expressly or impliedly in the language used. When the language of the statute is clear, there is no need for the rules of interpretation. But, in certain cases, more than one meaning may be derived from the same word or sentence. It is therefore necessary to interpret the statute to find out the real intention of the statute.

The concept of interpretation of a Statute cannot be static one. Interpretation of statutes becomes an ongoing exercise as newer facts and conditions continue to arise. Interpretation of Statutes is required for two basic reasons viz. to ascertain:

- Legislative Language - Legislative language may be complicated for a layman, and hence may require interpretation; and
- Legislative Intent - The intention of legislature.

INTERPRETATION OF BENEFICIAL STATUTES

A beneficial statute is a class of statute which seeks to confer benefit on individuals or class of persons. The established principle in the construction of such statutes is there should not be any narrow interpretation & hence strict literal interpretation must be avoided. The court should attempt to be generous towards the persons on whom benefit should be conferred. When a statute is interpreted liberally to give the widest possible meaning to it, it is called beneficent construction.

Meaning

Beneficial construction is an interpretation to secure remedy to the victim who is unjustly denied of relief. The interpretation of a statute should be done in such a way that mischief is suppressed and remedy is advanced.

Beneficent construction involves giving the widest meaning possible to the statutes. When there are two or more possible ways of interpreting a section or a word, the meaning which gives relief and protects the benefits which are purported to be given by the legislation, should be chosen. This is also known as purposive interpretation.

Rule of Restrictive / Strict Interpretation:

As the social, economic and political conditions of the society keep on changing, interpretations of laws also require change. Legislature is not equipped to meet such changing conditions and legislature cannot anticipate every situation which might occur in real life.

Thus, it is Courts which play the role and interpret the laws to adapt as per needs of the society. Strict rule of interpretation is one of the principles used to interpret fiscal and penal statutes.

According to this rule, plain, clear and direct meaning is given to words which are used in common parlance by the general public to which such law is applicable. There can be no presumption by court with respect to particular meaning. Court cannot give particular meaning to a word which is not clear by making a presumption that particular meaning is the intention of the legislature.

Court cannot under the guise of possible or likely intention of the legislature, give meaning to the words which are not clear and where contextual meaning cannot be made out.