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in **Rajasthan State Electricity Board v. Mohan Lal**, (1967) 3 SCR 377, Court had to decide whether the expression "other authorities" in Article 12 of the Constitution of India took its colour from the preceding expressions used in the said Article, making such authorities only those authorities who exercised governmental power. This was emphatically turned down by a Constitution Bench of this Court, stating:

"In our opinion, the High Courts fell into an error in applying the principle of ejusdem generis when interpreting the expression "other authorities" in Article 12 of the Constitution, as they overlooked the basic principle of interpretation that, to invoke the application of ejusdem generis rule, there must be a distinct genus or category running through the bodies already named. Craies on Statute Law summarises the principle as follows:

"The ejusdem generis rule is one to be applied with caution and not pushed too far.... To invoke the application of the ejusdem generis rule there must be a distinct genus or category. The specific words must apply not to different objects of a widely differing character but to something which can be called a class or kind of objects. Where this is lacking, the rule cannot apply, but the mention of a single species does not constitute a genus [*Craies on Statute Law*, 6th Edn, p 181]."

Maxwell in his book on '*Interpretation of Statutes*' explained the principle by saying: "But the general word which follows particular and specific words of the same nature as itself takes its meaning from them, and is presumed to be restricted to the same genus as those words .... Unless there is a genus or category, there is no room for the application of the ejusdem generis doctrine [*Maxwell on Interpretation of Statutes*, 11th Edn pp. 326, 327]". In *United Towns Electric Co., Ltd. v. Attorney-General for Newfoundland* [(1939) I AER 423] , the Privy Council held that, in their opinion, there is no room for the application of the principle of ejusdem generis in the absence of any mention of a genus, since the mention of a single species — for example, water rates — does not constitute a genus. In Article 12 of the Constitution, the bodies specifically named are the Executive Governments of the Union and the States, the Legislatures of the Union and the States, and local authorities. We are unable to find any common genus running through these named bodies, nor can these bodies be placed in one single category on any rational basis. The doctrine of ejusdem generis could not, therefore, be applied to the interpretation of the expression "other authorities" in this article.

The meaning of the word "authority" given in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, which can be applicable, is a public administrative agency or corporation having quasi- governmental powers and authorised to administer a revenue- producing public enterprise. This dictionary meaning of the word "authority" is clearly wide enough to include all bodies created by a statute on which powers are conferred to carry out governmental or quasi-governmental functions. The expression "other authorities" is wide enough to include within it every authority created by a statute and functioning within the territory of India, or under the control of the Government of India; and we do not see any reason to narrow down this meaning in the context in which the words "other authorities" are used in Article 12 of the Constitution." (at pages 384-385)

Tags: [COI Art. 12](#), [ejusdem generis](#), [Interpretation of Statutes](#)