Quest Journals
Journal of Education, Arts, Law and Multidisplinary
Volume 15 ~ Issue 6 (Nov. – Dec. 2025) pp: 98-104
ISSN(Online): 2347-2895
www.questjournals.org

Research Paper

Land Disputes, Revenue Administration, and Access to Justice: A Socio-Legal Study of Land Governance in Telangana

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Abstract
Land governance involves the authority to make decisions about land and its use. Conflicts may arise in the state of Telangana regarding ownership rights and claims, succession, boundaries, land classification, restricted transfer, and much more. This paper examines these problems using qualitative documentary socio-legal methodologies. It examines the revenue law of Telangana; the shift from 2020 Record of Rights framework to Telangana Bhu Bharati Act, 2022; select judicial pronouncements; scholarship on institutions and legal inequality. Special attention is paid to tackling revenue entries as opposed to deciding substantive title. Digitalisation can enhance service delivery but cannot resolve defective source records, unequal participation, or disputed ownership, according to the analysis. The court evidence shows that it is essential to establish jurisdictional facts, notify affected parties, give them a hearing and pass a reasoned order. Affordable documentation, appropriate legal aid, institutional coordination, and successful execution of remedies also determine access to justice. The document suggests implementing routing mechanisms which are specific to the disagreement or dispute. The university assessments do not determine how many people are experiencing disputes, nor do they assess those impacts across the state or estimate the implications of a "dispute."

Keywords: *land disputes, Telangana, revenue administration, Bhu Bharati, land records, access to justice, property rights, socio-legal governance*

I. Introduction

Land disputes have important relations at the heart of citizen-state relations. A questionable entry can hamper a household's capacity to cultivate, transfer, borrow, or succeed. While a problem may appear technical at first, its impact extends to income security, family relationships and social standing.

Through records, surveys, mutations, classifications, and statutory proceedings, revenue administration performs such mediation. However, administrative recognition is not the same as substantive ownership. A challenge may be made against a name registered; possession may not correspond with documentary title; and a transaction registered may remain affected by defects in the transferor's rights or statutory restrictions.

These differences are particularly relevant to the evolving record-of-rights framework in Telangana. To appreciate the functioning of the Bhu Bharati legislation an analysis of the statutory design and actual accessibility is required. Legislative change can create opportunity for correction and appeal but should not be taken to imply effectiveness upon enactment.

According to Deininger, land policy scholarship links secure rights with performance. However, the assessment of security has to be made from the perspective of people affected by it as well as those whose interests are not well-represented in formal records. An efficient processing of applications by system will leave some tough disputes unresolved.

This document seeks to discover the processes through which land conflicts are created and classified, how revenue institutions ought to respond, and what enables underprivileged claimants to access effective remedies. Land governance needs accurate evidence, fair processes and soil procedures that enforce these processes. The system must function as connected parts through technology, administrative action, and judicial remedies.

II. Research Objectives and Methodology

The objective of the study is to examine overall land-record governance framework in Telangana; segregation of major categories of disputes; analysis of selected judicial pronouncements; and recommendations that facilitate easy resolution of disputes.

The method employs a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. Legislation, rules, and judgements are primary sources. Works such as peer-reviewed research, a report by the institution and other crucial socio-legal literature. The materials focused on records, jurisdictional and administrative fairness, social inequality and remedies.

The Telangana Bhu Bharati (Record of Rights in Land) Act, 2022, along with the rules made thereunder, is the pertinent current legislation examined. The 2020 law is seen as being of historical significance and helping us to better understand transition issues. Relevant rulings demonstrate very specific procedural and jurisdictional issues, not a sample.

The dispute process consists of recognising a dispute; gaining access to evidence; choosing where to resolve it; taking part; the decision; and implementation. This method determines the location of where a formally available remedy becomes practically unavailable.

No interviews, household survey or a rich administrative dataset was collected. As a result, no made-up figures within the paper concerning dispute totals, corruption rates, average disposal periods, satisfaction percentage, and so on. Judicial conclusions are different from litigants' claims and policy recommendations are analytical proposals.

Through the documentary approach, institutional assessment is grounded but it cannot estimate the frequency or occurrence of issues in Telangana. The prevalence and reform effects need an empirical investigation.

III. Conceptual Framework: Institutions and Effective Rights

According to North, enforcement arrangements and established practices need to be taken into account along with formal rules. When it comes to land governance, the issue is not whether there's a correction procedure, but whether officials or citizens can use it in a predictable way.

Ribot and Peluso (2003) draw a distinction between property rights and the ability to benefit from resources. This distinction brings focus to ownership, finance, relationships and institutional support. A recognized claimant might continue to be unable to enjoy land for reasons such as access being blocked or the decision not being enforced.

Scholarship concerning access to justice likewise differs from courts. Cappelletti and Garth look into the conditions needed for rights to become effective while Galanter reveals how repeat participants can have advantages over one-off litigants (Cappelletti and Garth; Galanter). These frameworks can be used to consider issues such as information, representation, cost and sustainability of proceedings.

Sen's capability approach states that an institution should not just be assessed by its resources, but by the opportunities it creates. This includes documentation, presentation, protection of possession, award of a decision with enforcement for land claimants.

The evaluation of the governance in the paper takes place through their legality A decision might be legally defensible but difficult to access; an accessible procedure might still generate an unsupported outcome. Every dimension is important.

IV. Telangana's Revenue-Law Framework

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V. Classifying Land Disputes

A practical governance system must distinguish the problem before selecting its remedy.

Dispute category	Principal issue	Necessary inquiry
Record discrepancy	Incorrect name, extent, or particulars	Compare source documents and entry history
Succession or partition	Competing claims following death or division	Identify interested parties and applicable rights
Boundary dispute	Location or extent on the ground	Reconcile documents, maps, and field evidence
Classification dispute	Private, government, assigned, or other status	Establish the legal basis of classification
Title dispute	Competing substantive ownership claims	Determine the competent adjudicatory route
Implementation dispute	Decision not reflected in records or possession	Verify operative directions and compliance

These groups may have something in common. An alleged typographical error could hide a title dispute; whereas an apparent ownership dispute may be caused by a mistaken survey reference. Administrative acceptance should thus allow reclassification following initial examination. The risk is to treat every application as either a routine correction or an issue beyond administrative responsibility. The former has the potential to harm the rights of competitors, whereas the latter may compel citizens to engage in avoidable litigation. The Registration Act governs registration of documents pertaining to property and events, while Code of Civil Procedure supplies general framework for civil proceedings. (India, Registration Act; Code) It depends on what you want out of it. Registration, mutation, survey and adjudication are distinct functions and should not be conflated into a single administrative designation.

VI. Revenue Entries and Substantive Title

The difference between revenue entries and title is crucial to a dispute. In the above ruling, it was held that mutation itself does not confer ownership. Where, however, the title is in dispute, proper adjudication would be essential. (Jitendra Singh v. State of Madhya Pradesh.) While the ruling is ex-Telangana, it is a handy legal reference.

This principle has to, therefore, be read together with the evidentiary effect of the statute. One should not ignore the statutory presumption regarding the entry nor should it be treated as irrebuttable.

The bureaucratic function that results from the investigation is the determination of the limits of the proceeding. An authority that is called upon to rule on a record amendment must first ask itself what it is empowered to decide, what evidence it needs, and whether competing substantive claims require another forum.

Clear explanations are also needed by citizens. A refusal to mutate should make known the legal and factual hurdle rather than simply stating that a dispute exists. A similar amendment should provide the basis on which it is being supported and preserve the participation of persons who may be affected by it.

This technique diminishes the chances of a service application serving as an indirect means to determine ownership without protection.

VII. Administrative Evidence and Natural Justice

Coming to a land decision doesn't just require a conclusion. Identification of the parcel, the relevant legal provision, the evidence with the reasons connecting that evidence with the result.

In G. Shankar Reddy v. Revenue Divisional Officer, regarding land in Karimnagar, the High Court stressed that the authority first needed to establish the jurisdictional fact that the parcel was assigned land. It found fault with the unsupported conclusions in the challenged proceedings (G. Shankar Reddy, par. 7).

This demonstrates that one cannot assume classification. It does not show how often similar deficiencies happen in Telangana.

The reasoning of the Supreme Court in the case of Kranti Associates v. Masood Ahmed Khan (Kranti Associates) elaborates the significance of reasons in judicial and quasi-judicial decisions. Reasons allow affected individuals to comprehend the result and facilitate meaningful review.

In general, applicable notice and an opportunity to respond to relevant material relied upon, subject to governing law, are required for revenue administration. If not communicated properly, an issued document may undermine participation. Similarly, when a party cannot inspect the critical record, a hearing cannot be meaningful.

As a result, procedural protections enhance both administrative precision and personal fairness.

VIII. Contemporary Judicial Evidence under Bhu Bharati

It will be unusual with regard to the NCLT. The High Court examined notice, inquiry, reasoned decision-making, and the statutory appellate remedy. This authorized the option for any appropriate Zila Parishad to approach the appropriate higher forum and directed a hearing and a reasoned disposal.

Judgment distinguishes between reviewing admin deletion and finally determining competing ownership claims. It must not be characterized as an unconditional assertion of title by either party.

It is institutional in its larger significance. Organizational approval, communication, and review are required for any change that could seriously affect the business. An entry in electronic form does not diminish the need to identify the authoriser and the reason for the change.

The case further shows that statutory remedies remain relevant in a new system. Although there is an appeal, it does not mean that everyone can access it. Separate evaluation is required of costs, documentary requirements, and institutional capacity.

Just one modern judgment cannot determine the state-level success or failure of Bhu Bharati. It offers a specific instance of the procedural inquiries through which implementation may be evaluated.

IX. Digitalisation and the Production of Administrative Errors

Digitalisation can make it easier to find, to identify uniquely, to communicate rapidly, and to trace the processing of information. The benefits will depend on the design of correction mechanisms and the quality of source records.

The study on Telangana by Ramakumar and Ramesh highlights the historical exclusions and contradictions in land-record modernisation (Ramakumar and Ramesh). Scott maintains that standardized categories can obscure complex social relations and provides a broader explanation of administrative simplification.

The correct answer is verification rather than a belief that either paper or digital records are reliable. Versions that conflict should not be overwritten silently but rather retained and examined.

A legitimate system should be able to differentiate between data inputs, legal authorization, and adjudication. While technicians may maintain the software, the legal responsibility for changing rights-related information must remain identifiable.

Land-linked welfare can increase the impact of mistakes. The study of the Rythu Bandhu scheme by Thomas and co. looks at the connection between land records and identification of beneficiaries (Thomas et al.). The historical findings do not automatically apply to all later programmes. However, they do illustrate how record quality can impact access beyond registration services.

Performance evaluation must therefore assess corrected accuracy and sustained outcomes, not just applications processed or portal visits.

X. Frontline Administration and Institutional Coordination

Land governance often relies on proof held by different offices. Revenue records, registration documents, survey material and judicial recommendations may not match automatically. People can be responsible for taking information between institutions that must join forces.

Lipsky's concept of street-level bureaucracy draws focus on the discretion, work burden and the pragmatic reading of the policy of frontline officials. The framework proposes scrutinising the staffing, training, supervision and decision support instead of attributing every delay to individual wrongdoing.

Inspecting for evidence of a useful administrative distinction between a service request and a service adjudicatory proceeding, one discovers a definite social conflict capable of resolution. Obtaining a certified copy shouldn't follow the same procedure as deciding a matter with an amendment. On the contrary, disputed changes must have safety measures beyond the ordinary delivery of services.

Clear responsibility is also required. If an application cannot continue due to a requirement for evidence from another office, the applicant should be given the reasons, together with an identifiable reference. Forwarding issues repeatedly, without ownership results institutional delays.

The World Bank's historical assessment of land governance in Andhra Pradesh offers a wider frame of reference for studying institution arrangements. However, the geographic and temporal scope limits direct applicability to a present-day Telangana (World Bank).

XI. Access to Justice and Unequal Participation

The real expense of a disagreement goes past official fees. Potential costs could consist of travel, time not worked, document retrieval, representation, and return appearances. A claimant's decision to pursue or abandon a meritorious claim may depend on such burdens.

Participants in Institutions – Galanter's Framework – Participants in institutions have varied experiences. In Telangana, this proposition must be substantiated through evidence and not by assuming particular litigants (Galanter).

According to The Right to Information Act, request for information can be made regarding information with public authority as per provisions of the Act (India, Right to Information). The existing records may help identify the source of an entry. But an information request does not determine title nor substitute an appeal.

The Legal Services Authorities Act provides the structure to offer assistance to eligible persons. When it comes to land-related outreach, claimants need this to be able to properly identify the forum, preserve documents, understand deadlines and so on.

According to Tyler, Tyler's procedural-justice research provides a comparative basis for considering the relationship between fair treatment and institutional legitimacy. Do not consider its findings as measured outcomes of Telangana. They support investigating whether people feel they are listened to, understand decisions, and regard officials as neutral.

When participation is possible and the remedy is useful, access to justice can be achieved.

XII. Gender, Caste, and Substantive Inclusion

Not all members of a household may have the same ability to pursue a land claim. Hurdles regarding succession documents, family representation, mobility, or control over the proceedings may differ for women.

Agarwal (1994), in his analysis of property relations in South Asia, argues for looking at the command of land by women, rather than relying only on household ownership. Research ought to investigate whose interests are recorded and who makes decisions.

Access to evidence and institutional support may also depend on caste and class. Kumar and Moharaj's study of a village in Telangana shows inequality in land and asset between and within groups (Kumar and Moharaj). While inter-district disparities are far too large to reach a conclusion for every district in the country, the findings do issue a warning against treating broad social categories as internally uniform.

An inclusive procedure should identify affected persons on its own, rather than relying solely on a powerful family member or village intermediary. Distinct chance to submit evidence may reveal interests omitted otherwise.

Access to limited literacy also includes migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons and so on. Aid must make processes usable without transferring control of the claim to an unaccountable third party.

XIII. Assigned Lands and Community Rights

Special statutory protections complicate usual assumptions about transferability. The Assigned Lands Act is applicable to assignments and transfers covered by it. However, if it is applicable, the legal history of the parcel has to be examined (Telangana, Assigned Lands Act).

A registered transaction should not be considered sufficient evidence that every statutory restriction has been complied with. Furthermore, land originating from the government should not be presumed to fall under the statute without proving that it does.

Scheduled Areas and forest-dependent communities need further attention. The Gram Sabhas and the appropriate Panchayats are allocated roles under PESA, while the Forest Rights Act speaks about the specified individual and community rights (India, Provisions; Scheduled Tribes).

Ostrom's work shows that we need to look at institutions that govern shared resources rather than assuming the only legitimate interest is an individual title.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, guidelines created by the FAO offer a voluntary benchmark for recognizing legitimate tenure interests and providing accessible remedies. They do not supersede local law.

Land governance reform should therefore preserve space for collective claims and legal community participation. Organising a database around individual parcels may need additional arrangements to show shared interests.

XIV. Evaluating Remedies and Implementation

A disposal order is an intermediary event, and it is not necessarily the end of justice. The evaluation must establish whether or not the operative decision was communicated, whether it is reflected in relevant records and whether it was implemented within the competence of the authority.

Monitoring should differentiate among received applications, initiated proceedings, issued decisions, pending appeals, and completed remedies. Merging these categories can make administrative activity more effective than it actually is.

By turning down a development application, decision-makers can lawfully administer planning law when they act on proper grounds. Thus, disposal rates must be supplemented by procedural and accuracy measures.

There are useful indicators which include effective notice, access to relied-upon material, treatment of objections, communication of appeal information, and recurrence of the same grievance. Independent examination of these aspects does not assume that every negative outcome entails wrongdoing.

Disputes that never make it to court should also be studied by researchers. Court documents give an overrepresentation of parties able to litigate and cases serious enough to litigate. Different barriers may be revealed through abandoned application/informal complaint.

Institutional learning means treating repeated failures as evidence of a process problem instead of repeatedly putting the onus on the same citizen to achieve the same relief.

XV. Recommendations and Future Research

Telangana needs to evolve a proper dispute-routing system. Applicants must have clear directions on differentiating among correction, succession, survey, classification, statutory appeal and substantive title litigation.

Moreover, every major record alteration is to maintain an auditable tracking of the application, supporting documents, notice, authorising officer and order. Previous versions must remain accessible for lawful inspection.

Following that, a revenue decision should outline jurisdiction, evidence, findings, and remedies available. Standard formats may improve completeness, but reasoning must stay dispute-specific.

Furthermore, people will also be provided with assisted access on the services. Venues that provide assistance should support self-representation, including for those unable to access online systems.

The fifth point revolves around coordination of all orders. A designated office must also monitor compliance and provide clarifications on issues without fresh applications.

At last, administrative audits should combine with representative citizen research. An effective empirical design would categorize disputes based on type, location, social characteristics, and net outcome, then track cases over time. Confidential interviews should safeguard participants, and allegations should be disentangled from corroborated findings.

The present study did not estimate prevalence or attribute statewide outcomes to Bhu Bharati. In the future, researchers should compare procedural quality and the durability of remedies over time while controlling for changing caseloads.

XVI. Conclusion

Land governance must involve accurate information, rational decisions, just participation and effective remedies. The recent legal transition of Telangana provides for new institutional arrangements whose worth can be proved through implementation evidence. The examined judgments shown that jurisdictional facts, notice, hearing and reason are material even though the records are digital. They also illustrate the need of distinguishing administrative amendments from substantive title adjudication. Accessible justice refers to whether the people affected can obtain the evidence, access the right forum, participate meaningfully and get compliance. Any reform should be assessed based on the continuous resolution and protection of the legitimate interest in the long term, not just through the electronic processing of a machine.

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