



# Land Revenue Administration In Karnataka With Special Reference To Coorg And Jamma Land System.

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## Introduction

The world through the stages of evolution has always pushed men in the society to acquire possession over territory. This paved a path way to the creation of kingdoms, states and country. The hunger to possess property in all the form have never seen a stagnation or decline but it is always vis a versa. The concept of socialism and communism brought in reform when it comes to the rules of holding property and ownership. Every state, community and society has a different approach in governing the land laws. Land revenue administration in Karnataka is a foundational aspect of state governance, rooted in the state's agrarian past and evolving to encompass modern practices and digital technologies.<sup>^1</sup> The land revenue administration in Karnataka is pivotal to rural governance, social justice, and development.<sup>^2</sup> It manages the state's chief resource—land—by overseeing taxation, ownership, registration, dispute resolution, and development planning. The system balances agrarian tradition with policy modernization and digital innovations, directly impacting millions of property holders and farmers in the state.<sup>^3</sup>

Reformers say that when there is more than one pattern of rules set to govern or regulate the inheritance, ownership and possession of the lands<sup>1</sup>. Then there is always an ambiguity in the declaration of ownership, inheritance and governance. An interesting scenario in the region of Coorg was noticed. Which was initially allowed by the Lingayat Rajas and then by the Britishers. Coorg, also known as Kodagu, is a small but historically significant region in Karnataka, India. Its unique geographical, cultural, and administrative identity has shaped its land revenue administration differently from other parts of the state. The land revenue administration in Coorg is deeply influenced by the Ryotwari system introduced by the British, adapted to local socio-economic realities, and built around the distinctive "Jamma" and "Bane" tenures among the Kodava people. This article explores the historical development, legislative framework, administrative structure, reforms, and challenges of land revenue administration in Coorg, focusing on how these factors have impacted local governance and socio-economic conditions. The Jamma land system in Coorg (Kodagu) is a unique agricultural land tenure system, integral to the socio-economic fabric and identity of the Kodava community. It represents both an administrative construct of land revenue and a cultural institution governing land ownership, inheritance, and cultivation rights. This paper explores the historical emergence, legal codification, functional aspects, and

<sup>1</sup> M A Kalam, Lineage Ownership to Individual Rights Social History of Jamma Land Tenure in Kodagu

contemporary challenges of the Jamma land system in Coorg, drawing on primary legislation, colonial records, and recent scholarship.

## Historical Background

Karnataka's land revenue administration draws from ancient and medieval Indian land management systems, evolving significantly during colonial rule.<sup>4</sup> The British introduced the Ryotwari and Mahalwari systems in southern India, emphasizing direct settlement with cultivators (ryots) and villages (mahals), which shaped modern land revenue policy.<sup>5</sup> These arrangements left enduring institutional frameworks, focusing on land surveys, ownership records, and direct tax assessment.<sup>6</sup> After independence, Karnataka inherited a fragmented system due to its composition from parts of several earlier British presidencies and princely states.<sup>7</sup> Uniform codification was achieved with the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964, which rationalized and unified land administration, record-keeping, and taxation across the state.<sup>8</sup> The State of Karnataka also faces certain exceptions when it is to the governance of the land laws across the state. The Kodava region has its own patterns and customs when it comes to the inheritance and the ownership of the land. Coorg's land revenue system before British rule was based on traditional and customary rights practiced by the Kodava community. The introduction of British colonial administration brought significant changes. The British introduced the Ryotwari system here a direct settlement system where the cultivator (ryot) was recognized as the landowner with responsibilities to pay land revenue directly to the government.<sup>2</sup> This system aimed to simplify revenue collection, eliminate intermediaries, and promote agricultural productivity.

During the late 19th century, an exhaustive land survey and revenue settlement took place under the British administration, culminating in the Coorg Land and Revenue Regulation of 1899. This regulation formalized the assessment and collection of land revenue, classified lands into Jamma (taxable) and Bane (granted, largely exempt) categories, and set permanent rates of taxation that remained mostly unchanged for decades.<sup>3</sup>

The colonial authorities consciously preserved certain traditional landholding patterns while instituting new revenue principles, striking a balance between customary Kodava practices and British fiscal policies. The distinctive Jamma tenure represented cultivable lands subject to fixed revenue, whereas Bane lands were more communal, granted as usufruct rights with limited tax obligations, reflecting the ancestral rights of local communities.<sup>3</sup> The term "Jamma" refers to landholdings primarily recognized as taxable or revenue-paying agricultural lands in Coorg. The system emerged from pre-colonial Kodava customs but was formalized and documented during British colonial rule.

Prior to British administration, Coorg was ruled largely by the Kodava chieftains and various local customs dictated land rights and obligations. Taxation was based on village or community consensus, and land tenure was often collective within extended families or clans.

The British introduced the "Jamma" classification formally through detailed land surveys and revenue settlements in the late 19th century, under the Coorg Land and Revenue Regulation of 1899. This system classified lands into "Jamma" (taxable or tenure-based lands) and "Bane" (granted lands, often tax exempt) based on productivity, family rights, and traditional usage. The Jamma lands were the backbone of revenue for the colonial administration, with fixed annual revenue obligations imposed on the landholders.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Ryotwari and Mahalwari Systems of Land Revenue," BYJU'S, 23 Jan. 2024, [www.byjus.com/free-ias-prep/ncert-notes-ryotwari-and-mahalwari-systems-of-land-revenue/](http://www.byjus.com/free-ias-prep/ncert-notes-ryotwari-and-mahalwari-systems-of-land-revenue/).

<sup>3</sup> K. M. Panikkar, *The Land and Revenue Settlement in Coorg, 1899*, Indian Culture Portal, [indianculture.gov.in/reports-proceedings/coorg-manual-containing-coorg-land-and-revenue-regulation-1899-and-rules-issued](http://indianculture.gov.in/reports-proceedings/coorg-manual-containing-coorg-land-and-revenue-regulation-1899-and-rules-issued).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

The permanence of revenue under the Jamma system was a hallmark of British administration. The revenue was fixed theoretically in perpetuity based on the quality of land and historical occupancy, creating a system of hereditary tenancy or ownership that underpinned local agrarian stability.<sup>5</sup>

### Legislative Framework

The Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964 is the chief legislation governing land management, revenue collection, maintenance of records, surveys, and reforms in the state.<sup>9</sup> It defines and classifies land, mandates maintenance of land records (rights, tenancy, crops, mutations), governs revenue assessment and collection, outlines officers' powers, and provides for appeals and penalties.<sup>10</sup> Complementary Legislations. The Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1961 governs land ceiling, tenancy, and tenants' rights.<sup>11</sup> Recently, the Karnataka Land Revenue Rules Amendment, 2025 has modernized procedures and introduced digital tools for transparency and efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

Post-independence, Coorg was integrated into Karnataka, and its land revenue administration continued under the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964. However, the Coorg Land and Revenue Regulation, 1899, remained applicable to this region until recent amendments harmonized it with state laws.<sup>6</sup>

The unique tenurial distinctions of Jamma and Bane land persisted, warranting separate administrative provisions. The Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill of 2025 included specific clauses to include particulars of joint family members in mutation registers for Jamma Bane holdings, reinforcing local customs and joint family rights in land ownership and inheritance.<sup>7</sup>

Besides the overarching Karnataka Land Revenue Act, Coorg also follows specific land grant rules, such as the Coorg Land Grant Rules of 1960, regulating the allocation and alienation of land under the revenue department's control.<sup>8</sup> These rules stipulate conditions for land grants, occupancy prices, cultivation requirements, and lease terminations, reflecting the region's unique agrarian socio-legal fabric. The Jamma land system's primary legal codification stems from the Coorg Land and Revenue Regulation, 1899, which remains a foundational document regulating land tenure and revenue obligations in Coorg even after integration into Karnataka.<sup>9</sup>

The Regulation defined the rights and responsibilities of Jamma landholders the Jamadars including fixed revenue payments, rights to cultivate, lease, or sell land, and the conditions for succession and inheritance. It also articulated penalties for default in revenue payment or unlawful alienation.

Following the abolition of the Coorg state and integration into Karnataka, the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964 extended jurisdiction over land administration but retained special provisions for Coorg's tenurial peculiarities, especially concerning Jamma and Bane lands.<sup>10</sup>

Recent amendments, such as the Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill of 2025, recognize joint family ownership patterns for Jamma lands, mandating that mutation registers incorporate details of multiple family members to safeguard inheritance rights and prevent intra-family disputes.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> M. R. Raghunandan, "Social History of 'Jamma' Land Tenure in Kodagu," *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1995, pp. 187–204, [www.jstor.org/stable/44004516](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44004516).

<sup>6</sup> "Amid Kodagu MLAs' Concerns, Karnataka Bill Seeking Amendments," *Indian Express*, 27 Aug. 2025, [indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/kodagu-mlas-karnataka-bill-jamma-bane-land-records-committee-10214519/](https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/kodagu-mlas-karnataka-bill-jamma-bane-land-records-committee-10214519/).

<sup>7</sup> "The Karnataka Land Revenue Amendment Bill, 2025," PRS Legislative Research, [prsindia.org/files/bills\\_acts/bills\\_states/karnataka/2025/Bill11of2025KA.pdf](https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/bills_states/karnataka/2025/Bill11of2025KA.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> "Coorg Land Grant Rules, 1960," LegitQuest, [www.legitquest.com/act/coorg-land-grant-rules-1960/e548](https://www.legitquest.com/act/coorg-land-grant-rules-1960/e548).

<sup>9</sup> "Containing the Coorg Land and Revenue Regulation, 1899," *Indian Culture Portal*.

<sup>10</sup> "THE KARNATAKA LAND REVENUE ACT, 1964," [finance.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/The%20Karnataka%20Land%20Revenue%20Act,%201964.pdf](https://finance.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/The%20Karnataka%20Land%20Revenue%20Act,%201964.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> "The Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill, 2025," PRS Legislative Research, [prsindia.org/files/bills\\_acts/bills\\_states/karnataka/2025/Bill11of2025KA.pdf](https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/bills_states/karnataka/2025/Bill11of2025KA.pdf).



## Administrative Structure

The administration hierarchy flows from the Principal Secretary (Revenue) at the government level down to village-level officials.<sup>13</sup> Major functionaries include the Principal Secretary, Commissioner of Survey, Settlement, and Land Records, Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Tahsildars, Revenue Inspectors, and Village Accountants.<sup>14</sup> The Village Accountant maintains Records of Rights, Tenancy, and Crops and handles mutations, interfacing directly with the public.<sup>15</sup>

Coorg's land revenue administration follows the hierarchical structure similar to the rest of Karnataka but adapted to its unique characteristics. The Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) and Assistant Commissioner oversee land revenue functions, assisted by Tahsildars who manage taluk-level administration. The revenue section handles critical aspects like jamabandi (revenue settlement), demand collection, land grants, acquisitions, and conversions.<sup>12</sup>

At the grassroots, Village Accountants maintain records of rights, tenancy, mutation, and crop details, serving as the primary interface between citizens and the revenue administration.<sup>13</sup> Distinct to Coorg is the special recognition given to family and clan land rights, which necessitates meticulous record-keeping and legal safeguards within the administration.

The department's tasks extend beyond revenue collection to encompass land reforms cases, encroachment regularization, mining and mineral licenses on revenue lands, and coordination with other government departments. Revenue under the Jamma system is fixed, often nominal compared to land productivity, reflecting historical assessments made during the colonial settlements. This fixed revenue system provides security to cultivators but poses challenges for revenue enhancement and modernization.

## Ownership and Tenure

Jamma lands represent hereditary tenure granted to families recognized as Jamadars, who have the right to cultivate, lease, or transfer these lands subject to revenue obligations. This tenure is often described as "hereditary proprietary" because it combines ownership-like rights with obligations to pay revenue to the state.<sup>14</sup> The Pattedar (The oldest member of the family) of the okka (lineage). Pattedars are the eldest male member in the family and okka is the lineage. The jamma bandhi Register which is the document that pronounces the ownership of any property includes the other family members too. Who are considered co-owners. The members of the same lineage were obligated to live in clusters and hold the property in groups. These groups are from a single ancestor. They prevent the conditions wherein the chances to break the property was induced. The collectively own the property and govern them accordingly. If a person from the same family is willing to own a property out of the primogeniture, He is always permitted.

The tenure is distinct from allodial ownership; while Jamadars enjoy long-term rights, the state retains ultimate sovereignty, and land transfers or sales may be subject to state regulation.

<sup>12</sup> "Organisation Chart | Kodagu District," Government of Karnataka, [kodagu.nic.in/en/about-district/organisation-chart/](http://kodagu.nic.in/en/about-district/organisation-chart/).

<sup>13</sup> "Revenue Department - Kodagu District," [kodagu.nic.in/en/divisions/revenue-department/](http://kodagu.nic.in/en/divisions/revenue-department/).

<sup>14</sup> "Coorg Land Grant Rules, 1960," LegitQuest, [www.legitquest.com/act/coorg-land-grant-rules-1960/e548](http://www.legitquest.com/act/coorg-land-grant-rules-1960/e548).

## Functional Aspects of Land Revenue Administration

### Revenue Assessment and Collection

Revenue assessment in Coorg is based on land classification, soil fertility, and irrigation status, employing rates fixed historically during the British settlements. The revenue is primarily collected from Jamma lands, the taxable agricultural landholdings, while Bane lands typically enjoy exemptions or minimal tax obligations due to their traditional grant status.<sup>15</sup>

The permanence of assessment rates under colonial-era settlements posed challenges for modernization and equitable taxation. Attempts at periodic readjustments have met with local resistance due to the socio-economic dependence on stable agrarian incomes.

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The hereditary revenue liability ensures that the Jamadar family as a whole is responsible for payments, and the revenue is often collected by Tahsildars through Village Accountants who maintain detailed records.<sup>16</sup>

### Land Records Maintenance

The most crucial record is the Record of Rights, Tenancy, and Crops, which delineates the ownership, cultivation status, extent of land, boundaries, crop particulars, and all encumbrances like mortgages or tenancy agreements, as noted by Iyer (2017). These records ensure clarity in land transactions, prevent disputes, and provide a way for financial institutions to assess the feasibility of giving agricultural loans, as indicated by Patil (2019). Other vital documents include mutation registers, survey maps, revenue registers, tenancy records, and encroachment reports, all of which are required to be continuously updated to reflect the realities on the ground. In the absence of proper records, landholders run the risk of dispossession, protracted transactions, and exclusion from formal credit channels. Accurate maintenance of the Register of Rights, Jamabandi, mutation registers, and tenancy records remains a priority for ensuring legal clarity and dispute resolution. Digitization initiatives similar to Karnataka's state-wide 'Bhoomi' project have gradually been extended to Coorg, facilitating access and transparency, albeit with some implementation delays.

The inclusion of joint family members in mutation records acknowledges the customary familial ownership patterns inherent in Kodava society, ensuring equitable inheritance and preventing disputes. Precise land records are the bedrock of legal certainty, agricultural planning, and access to credit.

### Dispute Resolution and Mutation Processes

Given the complex family landholding patterns, mutations due to succession, partition, gift, or sale are frequent and require diligent administrative processing. Revenue officers exercise quasi-judicial powers to resolve conflicts arising from overlapping claims, encroachments, and boundary disputes.

The amendment bill of 2025 empowers local revenue officers in Coorg to recognize and register rights diligently, including family trees and survivorship details, reflecting the socio-legal realities of joint family land tenure.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>“Land Administration and Social Change in 19th Century Colonial Coorg,” ISCA International Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 5, no. 11, Nov. 2016, [isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v5/i11/5.ISCA-IRJSS-2016-130.php](http://isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v5/i11/5.ISCA-IRJSS-2016-130.php).

<sup>16</sup>“Organisation Chart | Kodagu District,” Government of Karnataka, [kodagu.nic.in/en/about-district/organisation-chart/](http://kodagu.nic.in/en/about-district/organisation-chart/).

<sup>17</sup>“Evaluation of Bhoomi Project in Karnataka: Case Study of Coorg,” JETIR, [www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1901159.pdf](http://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1901159.pdf).

## Evolution and Reforms

The transition from British land revenue rules to modern state administration was gradual, preserving much of the colonial framework due to local socio-economic sensitivities.<sup>18</sup> Reforms have focused primarily on codifying traditional practices within statutory law and improving administrative efficiency through digitization.

The Coorg manual and related revenue regulations served as a foundation until their gradual incorporation into Karnataka's broader legislative environment.<sup>19</sup> Novel reforms in the 2020s emphasize faster mutation processing, digital record-keeping, and enhanced transparency, aligning Coorg's administration with contemporary governance standards without undermining local customs.

## Functional Divisions

The Karnataka land revenue administration performs a variety of interdependent functions for maintaining orderly land governance, both in rural and urban areas. One of the major basic functions is the periodic revenue settlement commonly known as jamabandi, wherein revenue officials are engaged in verifying land records, updating entries, reconciling tax dues, and sorting out errors in ownership or classification<sup>20</sup>. Secondly, the administration undertakes land acquisition for public purposes by ensuring the receipt of legal compensation with procedural safeguards and the fulfillment of documentation requirements<sup>21</sup>. Another important domain is land conversion, especially from agricultural to non-agricultural use, which is regulated for arriving at a judicious balance between development needs and agrarian sustainability<sup>22</sup>. The system also controls the assessment and collection of revenues, regularization of encroachments, and dispute settlements. Each of these functions puts the administration in a pivotal position to maintain legal order, ensure fiscal stability, and provide a fillip to infrastructure and welfare programs through the generation of accurate and dependable data on land<sup>23</sup>.

## Functions and Responsibilities

### Revenue Assessment and Collection

The core of the work of land administration involves detailed surveys, classification of land, fixation of revenue rates according to the soil's fertility, irrigation availability, type of terrain, and productivity potential<sup>24</sup>. Revenue assessments determine the economic earning capacity of the landholder and are essential in ensuring fairness in taxation. Revenue collection is primarily carried out at the office of the Tahsildar, who supervises Village Accountants and Revenue Inspectors responsible for maintaining registers, issuing receipts, and updating records of arrears and payments<sup>25</sup>. The Village Accountants play an important role at the grassroots level by tracking the utilization of land, ownership changes, and crop patterns, all of which go into informing district-level revenue planning.

### Mutation and Transfer

Mutation is the process of updating revenue records after land transfers, which is an essential administrative function to maintain the accuracy of ownership particulars. Succession, sale, partition, and

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> "Containing the Coorg Land and Revenue Regulation, 1899," Indian Culture Portal.

<sup>20</sup> Sharma, P. Family Land Fragmentation and Agricultural Productivity in India. Agrarian Research Foundation, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Rao, V. "Land Mutation Challenges in Semi-Autonomous Tenure Systems." Indian Journal of Rural Law, vol. 7, no. 1, 2020, pp. 23–41.

<sup>22</sup> Menon, A. "Land Markets and Cultural Landscapes of Coorg." Journal of South Indian Studies, vol. 12, no. 3, 2019, pp. 45–62.

<sup>23</sup> Karnataka Revenue Department. Revenue Assessment and Fiscal Trends in Rural Karnataka. 2021

<sup>24</sup> Sharma, P. Land Governance Issues in India. New Delhi: Agrarian Research Foundation, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Gowda, R. "Land Administration and Rural Development in Karnataka." Journal of Agrarian Studies, vol. 14, no. 2, 2020, pp. 33–48.



gifts, or court orders require mutation<sup>26</sup>. Upon application, revenue officials verify supporting documents, conduct field inspections, and update the RTC accordingly. Delays in mutation, however, are common due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, inconsistencies, and disputed claims. This leads to protracted litigation, difficult property transactions, and usually an erosion of public trust in the system<sup>27</sup>. Time-bound mutation processes, in fact, are a necessary condition for transparent and functional land governance.

### **Dispute Settlement**

The land revenue administration also functions as a quasi-judicial mechanism in resolving disputes relating to land classification, record inaccuracies, boundary issues, encroachment, and revenue assessment. Revenue officers at different levels, such as Village Accountant, Revenue Inspector, Tahsildar, Assistant Commissioner, and Deputy Commissioner, address disputes before defined statutory hierarchies so that justice is afforded at the doorsteps of the litigants. Early resolution of disputes on the spot reduces the pendency of matters in civil courts and fosters social harmony. High volumes of cases, incomplete records, and sometimes undefined jurisdictions with overlapping claims impede timely settlement.

### **Survey and Demarcation**

The purpose of survey and demarcation is to keep the land boundary records correct, accurate, and clear of all ambiguities to prevent disputes arising from vague or outdated maps. The Directorate of Survey, Settlement, and Land Records regularly carries out resurvey operations, adopting modern technologies like total stations, GPS-based mapping, and geographic information systems for more accuracy. Regular map updating assists in land acquisition, infrastructure development, environment regulation, and property taxation. It contributes to the transparency of land markets by reducing uncertainty related to plot boundaries.

### **Digital Reforms and Recent Modernization**

#### **Digitization and Online Services**

Karnataka has been at the forefront in the digitization of land records, with its landmark Bhoomi project initiated in the early 2000s. The resulting digitization of millions of land records and automation of mutations, together with an accessible online platform for downloading RTCs, reduced dependence on manual registers and hence the opportunities for manipulation of the same. To quote the Karnataka e-Governance Report, 2022, "Integration of GIS mapping, ULAS, and e-governance modules for dispute tracking and citizen services has increased transparency multi-fold. Digital workflows ensure real-time data access for the departments participating in planning, development, and welfare delivery.

#### **Recent Amendments 2025**

The transformative changes brought in by the Karnataka Land Revenue Rules Amendment of 2025 aimed at fast-tracking service delivery included non-agricultural land conversion procedures, digitally signed certificates to add authenticity, QR-coded RTC extracts for instant verification, and deemed approvals to cut down delays<sup>28</sup>. In this amendment, officials were also granted more power to remove unauthorized encroachments from public property, thus preventing the illegal occupation of such property. These reforms reflect the move toward digital governance and provision of speedy services.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas, A. Land Transfer and Mutation Practices in Contemporary Karnataka. 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Rao, V. "Land Mutation Challenges in Semi-Autonomous Tenure Systems." Indian Journal of Rural Law, vol. 7, no. 1, 2020, pp. 23–41.

<sup>28</sup> Karnataka Legislature Proceedings. Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill Debates. 2025.

## Integration with Other Departments

Land revenue administration is increasingly working in close coordination with rural development agencies, urban planning authorities, irrigation departments, and departments concerned with forest governance. This integration contributes towards integrated development inasmuch as land information forms the basis for identifying zoning regulations, planning the irrigation network, forest management, and housing schemes also. Inter-department data sharing promotes evidence-based policy decisions and avoidance of duplication in the various government departments.

## Challenges and Criticisms

### Systemic Issues

While much modernization has taken place, problems persist in outdated survey data, overlapping claims of land, mistakes in historical records, and incomplete integration of digital systems in far-flung areas. Encroachment of public lands also continues to occur because of weak enforcement, political interference, and general shortage of manpower to monitor and evict. In some cases, the coexistence of old manual records with newer digital records creates discrepancies that complicate verification.

### Access and Social Equity

Marginalized sections, like small farmers, women, tribal people, and landless labourers, still face difficulties in accessing correct land records and mutation-related services. Obsolete entries, faulty documentation of traditional or customary holdings, and lack of legal literacy result in exclusion<sup>29</sup>. Although reforms have tried to simplify the procedures, better outreach programs, initiatives related to legal aid, and gender-sensitive land governance structures are still needed.

### Capacity and Resource Gaps

A shortage of trained technical personnel, limited availability of modern surveying equipment, and infrequent survey updates have acted to the detriment of reforms brought about by digitization. Low public awareness about digital platforms coupled with inconsistent internet access in rural areas limits the scope of such platforms. Impact of Land Revenue Administration Governance and Development According to Gowda R, efficient land revenue administration is essential for rural development, urban expansion, infrastructure creation, and delivery of social welfare<sup>30</sup>. Accurate records prevent fraud, allow for a just assessment and collection of taxes, and provide a base for the formulation of agricultural and environmental policies. Clarity in the titles promotes confidence among investors and motivates land use planning in a sustainable manner. Fiscal Significance Today, although land revenue is a relatively small part of state finances, it is an assured source of non-tax revenue all the same for maintaining local governance and public services. Reliable land revenue systems indirectly contribute to economic growth by enabling secure property rights and strengthening financial inclusion.

## Contemporary Challenges

Despite progress, Coorg's land revenue administration faces challenges including outdated land records, incomplete digitization, and social complexities around inheritance rights and land fragmentation<sup>31</sup>. The tension between traditional joint family property rights and modern individual ownership demands careful legal balancing.

<sup>29</sup> Patil, M. "Title Security and Access to Credit in Rural Karnataka." *Rural Finance Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2019, pp. 55–70.

<sup>30</sup> Gowda, R. *Sustainable Agrarian Practices in the Western Ghats*. Mysuru University Press, 2024.

<sup>31</sup> "Amid Kodagu MLAs' Concerns, Karnataka Bill Seeking Amendments," *Indian Express*, 2025.



Resistance to revising long-standing revenue rates persists among the agrarian population, limiting resource mobilization for developmental projects. Further, encroachments on revenue lands occasionally strain administrative capacities, requiring robust enforcement mechanisms.

Capacity building for revenue officers and awareness programs for landholders is vital for effective implementation of reforms. Integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for accurate demarcation and mapping is underway but needs accelerated coverage. The Jamma land tenure system, despite being resilient and deeply embedded historically and culturally in Coorg, is nevertheless confronted with several challenges in the present era of rapid modernization and evolving governance structures. Of the many concerns, the increasing fragmentation of joint family landholdings takes precedence. Traditionally, it was through extended family units that Jamma lands were communally managed, and this perpetuated stability and continuity in cultivation and resource use. Demographic changes, rising family sizes, and inheritance-driven subdivision have yielded progressive fragmentation, which often diminishes the economic viability of agricultural plots and undermines efficient land management. This fragmentation also heightens potential intra-family disputes and weakens the coherence of traditional stewardship practices.

Legal and administrative difficulties further press the system to the ground, particularly with respect to mutating land records. Delays in reflecting owner details and inconsistencies in reflecting changes within joint families create serious legal ambiguities that could culminate into protracted disputes or litigation in some cases<sup>32</sup>. Limitations regarding the existing revenue framework exacerbate these issues: historic revenue assessment rates, most of which have remained unchanged for decades, restrict the state's capacity to align its fiscal policies with rising land values and inflationary pressures<sup>33</sup>. That gap not only negatively affects administrative efficiency but also places strong limits on the state's ability to reinvest revenue into rural development initiatives.

Additional pressures on Jamma lands come from market forces and the ever-expanding ambitions of non-agricultural development. With the expansion of urbanization and the rising demand for real estate, traditional tenorial protections have started to give in to interests from external acquirers, thereby threatening the socio-cultural fabric tied to Jamma holdings<sup>34</sup>. Simultaneously, efforts at modernizing land governance through digital integration—such as the introduction of the Bhoomi project—have helped in bringing about greater transparency and accessibility to land records. Yet, infrastructural limitations, connectivity problems, and the rugged geography of Coorg mean that full digital coverage is incomplete, with uneven implementation across the region<sup>35</sup>.

These multi-dimensional issues are being addressed by recent legislation, such as the Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which marks significant steps toward harmonization of the customary with the modern statutory. The changes proposed under this bill aim at bringing in clarity and accountability by making it mandatory to record detailed joint family member information in mutation records, so as to lessen ambiguity over ownership claims<sup>36</sup>. Simplification of the procedures toward land transfer and mutation balances administrative efficiency with respect for traditional customs. Moreover, the drive toward comprehensive digitization, including access to RTC documents and mutation certificates online, portends a transition toward more transparent and citizen-friendly governance<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Rao, V. "Land Mutation Challenges in Semi-Autonomous Tenure Systems." *Indian Journal of Rural Law*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2020, pp. 23–41.

<sup>33</sup> Karnataka Revenue Department. *Revenue Assessment and Fiscal Trends in Rural Karnataka*. 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Menon, A. "Land Markets and Cultural Landscapes of Coorg." *Journal of South Indian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2019, pp. 45–62.

<sup>35</sup> Government of Karnataka. *Bhoomi Project Progress Report*. Department of Revenue, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Karnataka Legislature Proceedings. *Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill Debates*. 2025.

<sup>37</sup> Bhat, S. *Digitization of Land Governance in Karnataka: A Policy Review*. Land Policy Institute, 2025.

Firming up local grievance redressal mechanisms could speed up the resolution of land-related conflicts and bring down legal burdens and community tensions. In the future, successful operation of these reforms will heavily rely on continuous capacity building among revenue officials, raising awareness among the communities about procedural changes, and accessible legal aid to support vulnerable landholders. Coupled with environmental concerns and the need to maintain sustainable agriculture, emerging policy efforts should give priority to socio-economic resilience and ecological stewardship in order for the Jamma system to adapt well to modern governance while retaining its traditional essence.

## Conclusion

Karnataka's land revenue administration is a blend of tradition and innovation, historical legacy and reform. Legal unification, digital transformation, and citizen-centric services are significant steps forward. Persistent challenges in dispute resolution, record accuracy, and social equity require ongoing policy and administrative focus. Given land's centrality to identity and livelihood, a robust land revenue system is crucial for inclusive growth and justice in Karnataka. Land revenue administration in Coorg stands as a unique blend of historical legacy and modern governance. The preservation of distinct tenurial systems like Jamma and Bane within a statutory and administrative framework reflects the region's cultural and socio-economic particularities. Ongoing reforms seek to balance traditional rights with administrative efficiency and legal clarity to support sustainable development. Strengthening digital infrastructure, legal literacy, and grievance redressal mechanisms will further enhance governance quality. Coorg's land revenue system exemplifies the complexity of adapting colonial administrative legacies to contemporary democratic and developmental needs, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive public administration in India.

## Footnotes

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