Khatauni, Mutation and Demarcation: A Practical Guide to India's Land Records

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Figure 1. Maps, measuring chains and a digital land record: the old and new tools of revenue administration.

Most Indian families learn about land records the hard way. A father dies and the khatauni still shows his name three years later. A buyer pays for a plot and discovers that the seller's brother is also recorded on it. A neighbour's new wall moves a metre into the field, and nobody can say where the boundary really ran. These disputes rarely begin in a civil court. They begin at the tehsil, with a lekhpal or patwari, a register and a map, and they are often settled or lost there. Understanding how that system works, and what it can and cannot decide, is the first protection any landholder has.

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One record, many names

Every state keeps a **record of rights**: a village-level register that shows who holds each parcel, their share, the area, the class of land and, in many states, the crops and any charges. The idea is national. The name, format and governing law are not, because land and land revenue are state subjects.

- **Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand:** khatauni (holdings arranged by account, or khata).
- **Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan:** jamabandi (a certified copy is often called a fard).
- **Maharashtra and Gujarat:** the 7/12 extract (satbara), combining village forms VII and XII.
- **Karnataka:** the RTC (Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crops), commonly called the pahani; **Telangana** and **Andhra Pradesh** use pahani and adangal.
- **Tamil Nadu:** patta and chitta. **West Bengal:** khatian.

Alongside the record of rights sit two other documents. The **khasra** is the field book: a plot-by-plot register keyed to survey or khasra numbers. The **village map** (the cadastral map, often called the shajra or naksha in the north) shows each numbered plot on the ground. In Uttar Pradesh, section 30 of the UP Revenue Code, 2006 obliges the Collector to maintain a map and khasra for every village, and section 31 requires a record of rights (khatauni) listing tenure holders, their shares, and the land vested in the State and Gram Panchayat.[1]

A practical rule follows: when you check land, read all three together. A name in the khatauni means little if the khasra number does not match the map, or if the map shows a plot that has since been split.

Mutation: why your name in the register is not your title

Mutation (dakhil kharij in much of north India, intkal in Punjab and Haryana, ferfar in Maharashtra) is the process of changing the name in the record of rights after a sale, gift, inheritance or court decree. It matters: mutation lets the new holder pay land revenue,

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obtain crop loans, claim scheme benefits and deal with the land smoothly.

But it is not ownership. The Supreme Court restated this in **Jitendra Singh vs. State of Madhya Pradesh** (SLP (C) 13146 of 2021, decided 6 September 2021). A grandson had obtained mutation on the strength of a disputed will. The Court upheld the High Court's decision to set the mutation aside, holding that a mutation entry "does not confer any right, title or interest" and is made "only for the fiscal purpose". Where title is disputed, particularly under a will, the claimant must go to the civil court, establish the right, and only then seek mutation.[2] The Court relied on a long line of authority, including Balwant Singh vs. Daulat Singh (1997) 7 SCC 137 and Suraj Bhan vs. Financial Commissioner (2007) 6 SCC 186.

Two consequences are worth absorbing:

1. **A mutation in your favour does not cure a defective title.** If the sale deed is void, or the will is invalid, the entry will not save you.
2. **A mutation against you does not take away your title.** It shifts the practical burden, but the question of ownership remains open before the competent court.

There is a nuance. Section 40 of the UP Revenue Code says entries in the khatauni are presumed true until the contrary is proved.[?] That presumption is evidence, especially of possession, and it can be rebutted. It does not turn a fiscal entry into a title deed.

How mutation works in Uttar Pradesh

The UP Revenue Code, 2006 sets out a clear sequence:[?]

- **Succession (section 33):** the heir reports to the Revenue Inspector. If no one disputes it, the Revenue Inspector records the succession. If it is disputed, he inquires and reports to the Tahsildar. A person left out, or aggrieved by his order, may apply to the Tahsildar.
- **Transfer (section 34):** anyone obtaining possession by transfer, such as a sale or gift, must report it to the Tahsildar in the prescribed manner.
- **Decision (section 35):** the Tahsildar issues a proclamation inviting objections, inquires, and either amends the khatauni (if undisputed) or decides the dispute. An

appeal lies to the Sub-Divisional Officer within 30 days.

- **No bar on a title suit (section 39):** mutation and correction orders do not stop anyone from establishing their rights through a declaratory suit under section 144.

Uttarakhand: the older statutes, adapted

Uttarakhand did not adopt the 2006 Code. It continues to apply the UP Land Revenue Act, 1901 and the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, as adapted for the state. Mutation is reported to the Tahsildar under section 34 of the 1901 Act, and the Tahsildar inquires and amends the annual register under section 35.[3] The Board of Revenue, Uttarakhand publishes the mutation process and its standard operating workflow on its website.[4] The principle is the same: mutation proceedings are summary, and title is for the courts.

Demarcation and measurement

Boundary disputes are among the most bitter in rural India, partly because a few feet of land can carry generations of grievance. In Uttar Pradesh, section 24 of the Code gives the **Sub-Divisional Officer** power to decide boundary disputes by summary inquiry, either on his own motion or on an application by an interested person.[?]

- The boundary is fixed from the existing survey map (or the consolidation map, where revised). Only if that is not possible is it fixed on the basis of actual possession.
- If possession is unclear, the SDO decides who is best entitled and puts that person in possession. If someone was wrongfully dispossessed, the SDO restores them, using force if necessary, and then fixes the boundary.
- The proceeding should, as far as possible, be concluded **within three months** of the application.
- An appeal lies to the **Commissioner within 30 days**, whose order is final, subject to the revisional power under section 210.

In practice, the field measurement (paimaish) is carried out by revenue staff working from the village map. The quality of the outcome depends heavily on the quality of the

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map and on whether neighbours were properly notified. Insist on notice to all adjoining holders and keep a copy of the field report.

Partition of agricultural land

Co-owners of agricultural land often hold it jointly for decades until a sale, a loan or a family quarrel forces the question. In Uttar Pradesh, a bhumidhar who is a co-sharer may file a **suit for division of the holding** under section 116 of the Code. The suit lies before the court of the **Assistant Collector** (section 117), which also apportions the land revenue. The Gram Panchayat must be made a party, several holdings can be divided in one suit where all parties are jointly interested in each, and trees, wells and other improvements are divided or valued and adjusted.[?]

Partition by registered deed or family settlement is often quicker and cheaper where everyone agrees. Even then, the resulting division must be reflected in the record of rights, which brings you back to mutation.

Correcting errors in the record

Wrong names, wrong areas, a missing co-sharer or a plot mapped to the wrong number: errors in revenue records are common, and some are deliberate. Under section 38 of the UP Code:[?]

- An application for correction of the map, khasra or khatauni goes to the **Tahsildar**, who inquires and refers the case to the **Collector** (for map corrections) or the **SDO** (for other corrections).
- Any person aggrieved may appeal to the **Commissioner within 30 days**.
- **Forged or manipulated entries** can be expunged under this section.
- Undisputed errors can be corrected by the Revenue Inspector.

Note the limit in section 32(2): a correction application is not maintainable where the claim rests solely on possession and involves an intricate question of title. Those disputes belong in a declaratory suit.

Appeals and revisions before revenue officers

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Revenue proceedings have their own appellate ladder, and the deadlines are short. Under the UP Code:[?]

Remedy	Where it lies	Time limit
First appeal (section 207)	Forum named in the Third Schedule for that kind of order	30 days
Second appeal (section 208)	Forum named in the Third Schedule; only on a substantial question of law	90 days
Revision (section 210)	Board of Revenue or Commissioner (not both), where no appeal lies	60 days
Restoration of ex parte order (section 209 proviso)	The court that passed the order	30 days

Several orders are **not appealable** under section 209, including interim orders, stay orders, remand orders, consent orders and orders on condonation of delay. Choosing the wrong remedy, or filing late, can end a strong case before it is heard. A person who has applied for revision to the Board cannot then go to the Commissioner against the same order, or the reverse.

Digitisation: DILRMP, Bhu-Naksha and Bhu-Aadhaar

The **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**, run by the Department of Land Resources, has moved most of this paperwork online. According to the government, records of rights had been computerised in over 97 per cent of villages and cadastral maps digitised for over 97 per cent of the country by the end of 2025.[5] In September 2026, the Centre approved **DILRMP 3.0** for 2026–2031, with an outlay of ₹565.50 crore, covering a GIS-based "Land Stack", modernised sub-registrar offices and paperless revenue courts linked to land records.[6]

Three tools matter to ordinary landholders:

- **State land record portals**, such as UP Bhulekh, where you can view the khatauni by village, khata or khasra number.[7]

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- **Bhu-Naksha**, the digitised village map application used by many states, which shows your plot on the cadastral map.
- **ULPIN or Bhu-Aadhaar**, a 14-digit alphanumeric number assigned to each land parcel based on the geo-coordinates of its boundary points. It has been rolled out in 29 states and union territories, including Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.[8]

Digitisation helps, but it does not change the legal position. An online khatauni is still a fiscal record. And a digitised error is still an error, sometimes harder to spot because it looks official. Always compare the online entry with certified copies and the underlying documents.

A short checklist before you act

1. Obtain the current khatauni (or equivalent), the khasra and the map extract for the plot.
2. Match the khasra numbers, areas and names against the sale deed, will or decree.
3. Report a sale or succession promptly, and track the mutation until the record actually changes.
4. If an order goes against you, note the date: most revenue appeals run on 30-day clocks.
5. If ownership itself is disputed, accept that the civil court (or, in UP, a declaratory suit) is the real forum.

How Vakil Dial can help

Land matters reward early, careful work and punish delay. Vakil Dial's Land & Revenue Matters division helps with exactly the problems described here: reviewing your khatauni, khasra, map extracts and title papers to spot gaps; preparing and filing mutation, correction and demarcation applications; and preparing appeals and revisions before revenue officers within the limitation period. Where a matter needs an advocate to appear, Vakil Dial can connect you with a verified legal professional from its network who handles revenue and land work. Where the dispute is really about title, or the land is urban property, it can also bring in its Property & Real Estate team.

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To start, send a description of your matter through the free Free Legal Advice page. Sending an enquiry costs nothing and does not commit you to any paid service: the Vakil Dial team reviews it, replies, and if a paid service would help, explains it to you first. You can follow your matter in "My Conversations" after signing in. If you first want to understand a term or a procedure, MAATRA, Vakil Dial's intelligent legal-information persona, can explain the concepts in general terms.

This is general legal information, not legal advice; every matter depends on its facts.

Conflicts of interest

This guide is published by Vakil Dial, which offers the services it describes.

Notes

1. The Uttar Pradesh Revenue Code, 2006 (sections 24, 30–40, 116–117, 144, 207–210), India Code https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/17001
2. Jitendra Singh vs. State of Madhya Pradesh, SLP (C) No. 13146 of 2021, Supreme Court of India, order dated 6 September 2021 https://indiankanoon.org/doc/104309066/
3. LBSNAA, Compendium on Land Laws in 6 States (Uttarakhand chapter: mutation of land records) https://www.lbsnaa.gov.in/pdfs/1745905030_Compendium%20on%20Land%20Laws%20in%206%20States%20
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6. Press Information Bureau, DILRMP 3.0 approved with outlay of ₹565.50 crore for 2026–2031 https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2308966
7. UP Bhulekh, Government of Uttar Pradesh land records portal https://upbhulekh.gov.in
8. Department of Land Resources, Bhu-Aadhar: Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) https://www.dolr.gov.in/offerings/initiative/details/bhu-aadhar-unique-land-parcel-identification-number-ulpin-UjMwMTMtQWa

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