

HISTORIC VICTORY!

Jammu and Kashmir Cricket team is the national Champions! Lifting the Ranji Trophy has been a dream come true for not only individual players but for the visionaries who have been behind the team's transformation over the years. The Paras Dogra led team dominated right from the start of the championship. The crisp talent, the attitude of players and the unity of the team did were noticed by analysts and many of them had predicted the results. The J&K team rise has been phenomenal and goes in sync with the changing ground situation in the UT. Hopefully, the hard work and vision of leaders like Mithun Manhas, the BCCI chief, and others will be documented and told to the world. Team don't win only because there is an overdose of talented players; they win because of someone visualizing them as winners, working to actualize this dream and then cobbling a team to execute the plan. The visionary also cobbles a team for the winning combination keeping in mind the larger picture of the competitions the team would face.

The victory has given the people across the UT a chance to celebrate a common cause. The historic moment has redefined the relationship between the people of different regions of J&K. The UT is as diverse as India; likewise the J&K cricket team too reflects this diversity. If Paras Dogra is leading the team and Shubam Pundir hit the highest score to be crowned Man of the match, Aquib Nabi's pace was noticed by cricket lovers as well as cricket experts. Together we can make it; divided, we will surely fall. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has been a consistent cheer leader of the J&K team. When he reached the Hubli stadium well in time to watch the historic final of the Ranji Trophy in the Hubli stadium, it surly boosted the morale of the team. This historic win must change the culture of sports in J&K.

Coal belt climate reform starts with women

Vivek Kumar Singh

India's land dispute crisis is often described as a problem of imprecise records, administrative inefficiency and pending cases. Yet these explanations only address the symptoms. The deeper problem lies in how India understands land title itself. For decades, policy discussions have revolved around achieving "conclusive" land titling, as though ownership can be permanently fixed through a single legal exercise. This ambition, however well-intentioned, rests on a flawed premise. Land title is not static. It evolves continuously with every lawful transaction. Trying to make it conclusive is, in effect, a conceptual mistake.

The terminologies dominating the debate - "conclusive title" and "presumptive title" - are themselves misleading. These expressions, borrowed from foreign jurisdictions, fail to reflect Indian administrative realities. Instead of chasing linguistic perfection, India must recognise what already exists in practice: a dual structure consisting of a foundational title and a derived or current title, supported by two interconnected layers of Record of Rights.

The first layer arises from survey and settlement operations. Historically, cadastral surveys, boundary verification, public notices, and objection hearings have been designed to establish a legally authenticated baseline of ownership. Settlement proceedings has brought order to fragmented claims. They have produced an archival Record of Rights that carries institutional legitimacy because they emerge from a structured public process. These exercises were designed to resolve accumulated uncertainty and provide a stable baseline for governance. To take it home further, some states enunciated clear-cut laws mandating an annually updated record of rights.

Yet settlement never creates permanent ownership. The moment land is sold, inherited, or partitioned, the original

record, though historically accurate, becomes factually outdated. Its true value lies in providing a starting point—a foundational title—from which future transactions derive legitimacy. Calling such title "conclusive" misunderstands its role. Settlement stabilises land relations; it does not freeze them.

If settlement records represent the past, mutation records represent the present. Here lies one of the most persistent misconceptions in Indian land

law. Courts frequently observe that mutation entries are meant only for fiscal purposes and do not confer title. Mutation is also quite often dismissed as mere evidence of possession, as though it reflects nothing more than physical occupation. Borne out of a strata of judicial precedents, these pronouncements undermining mutation have successively failed to appreciate the quasi-judicial genesis and process of mutation.

In practice, mutation cases are based on specific Acts and rules. Revenue authorities do not alter records casually; they do so after issuing notices, hearing parties, perusing records and passing orders only after an application for mutation is received. When a mutation is approved, the State formally recognises that ownership has changed. Governments do not collect land revenue from arbitrary occupants. Unlike electricity or water charges, which may be recovered from users irrespective of ownership, land revenue is assessed only against persons recognised as legitimate holders in official records. The State is bound to demand rent from those it considers bona fide landholders, not from encroachers or trespassers. Revenue authorities do not alter records casually; they do so after administrative scrutiny. When a mutation is approved, the State formally acknowledges that the recognised holder of land has changed.

Mutation, therefore, reflects legal possession grounded in recognised ownership. It is attained through a legally mandated best-claim principle, i.e., among

competing claims for legal ownership of land, the claim validated and recorded through a quasi-judicial process enjoys presumptive legitimacy, unless further displaced through due process. The updated transactional or mutated Record of Rights, thus decided, is in practice, India's closest functional definition of current title for all practical purposes.

India, thus, already operates with two parallel but complementary systems: an archival Record of Rights created through settlement and a transactional Record of Rights continuously updated through mutation. States that have digitised these layers demonstrate that the model works when allowed to function coherently. The real problem is not the absence of records but the absence of doctrinal clarity about their legal status.

Recognising a derived title based on updated revenue records would also help distinguish lawful possession from encroachment. When mutation records are given appropriate legal respect, they create a clear evidentiary line between bona fide holders and illegal occupants. Today's ambiguity encourages litigation precisely because lawful possession is not institutionally trusted. Citizens approach civil courts merely to confirm what revenue records already acknowledge, turning litigation into a preventive strategy rather than a corrective mechanism. Authentic State-notified foundational titles combined with legally respected derived titles can provide stability without constructing an entirely new titling regime.

At present, India effectively operates a system of case-based titling, where ownership ultimately depends on judicial declarations obtained after prolonged litigation. Civil courts, designed to resolve disputes between parties, have inadvertently become substitute land settlement authorities. This institutional mismatch explains why title suits frequently extend across generations. Ironically, the titular status of the plots which do not part of any civil suit, concluded or pending, hangs perpetually in the balance, for want

of a judicial stamp!

A shift toward recognising foundational and derived titles would restore propriety and balance, vis-à-vis land titles through a continuously updated record-of-rights that establishes an authoritative snapshot of lawful holdings at a particular point in time. Administrative systems may establish and maintain titles, while courts would be free to intervene where genuine disputes arise. This would reduce litigation, improve market confidence, and restore public faith in land governance.

The renewed push toward nationwide conclusive titling risks overlooking this reality. Draft reform proposals attempt to survey and title all forms of immovable property without even clearly defining land itself, instead relying on expansive notions of immovable assets. Such an approach faces enormous practical barriers. Urban properties, informal subdivisions, layered tenure arrangements, and historically evolved holdings cannot be exhaustively surveyed and permanently fixed in a single exercise.

The danger is that such an endeavour becomes an expedition chasing a mirage, seeking absolute certainty where only interim reality is possible. India does not lack authentic, digitised land records; it lacks alignment between legal doctrine and administrative practice.

Land title certainty does not require theoretical perfection. It requires legal honesty. Land titles change with times. Land records evolve with it. State-authenticated derived and mutated records deserve institutional respect. Replacing the misleading binaries of conclusive and presumptive title with the more grounded concepts of foundational and derived title would align Indian land law with lived reality.

The path to reform lies not in inventing new abstractions but in recognising the strength of systems already operating across the states, and giving them the legal clarity they have long lacked.

THE COST OF A CAREER PAUSE: WHEN GROWTH STANDS STILL

RACHNA LAKHPATI

Thirteen years ago, when I resigned from my position in Dubai, I was earning Rs 1 lakh per month. It was a stable income, a promising trajectory, and the pride of financial independence in a global marketplace. I stepped away not out of dissatisfaction, but out of choice—to raise my child, to be present in the years that do not return.

It was a conscious sabbatical, one rooted in responsibility and love. Today, after more than a decade, I have re-entered the workforce in India. The first offer I have received stands at Rs 1 lakh per month.

The same figure. On paper, it may appear neutral. In reality, it is deeply telling. In thirteen years, economies have fluctuated, industries have evolved, inflation has surged, and expectations from employees have multiplied. The world has moved forward at lightning speed. Yet for many professionals—particularly women who take career breaks for caregiving—compensation often seems frozen in time.

Where is the growth? This is not a personal grievance; it is a structural question.



Career pauses are still viewed through a narrow lens. Experience is measured by uninterrupted corporate tenure rather than cumulative capability. A gap in employment history is often treated as erosion rather than evolution.

But what exactly happens during a sabbatical taken for caregiving? Motherhood—or caregiving in any form—is not a professional vacuum. It is crisis management without a manual. It is multitasking under pressure. It is negotiation, budgeting,

emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and time optimization rolled into everyday life. These are precisely the soft skills organisations claim to seek in leaders.

Yet when a professional returns after years of nurturing a family, the compensation often reflects caution, not confidence. There is also the invisible comparison. Had I remained in Dubai and continued climbing the

corporate ladder without interruption, my income would likely have grown incrementally through promotions and annual raises. Compounded growth is the reward for continuity. But what about those who temporarily step off that ladder?

Does choosing family automatically disqualify one from financial progression? Many returning professionals are subtly told to be grateful. "At least you found a role." The subtext suggests that the market has done them a favour. But gratitude

should not replace equity. Fair compensation is not a privilege; it is recognition of value.

The modern workplace prides itself on inclusion and diversity. Policies highlight gender balance and equal opportunity. But inclusion is not complete until it accommodates nonlinear careers. Growth cannot be reserved only for those who follow a straight, uninterrupted path.

Across households, countless women—and increasingly men—make career sacrifices to stabilise families. Their contribution sustains the social fabric. Yet when they seek to rejoin the economic framework, they often start from where they left off, not where time should have reasonably taken them.

Thirteen years later, I am not the same professional who once walked away. I bring maturity, resilience, emotional intelligence, and a broader worldview. The number on the offer letter may be identical, but the value I carry has multiplied. The real question is this: will our systems evolve to recognise it? Growth should not be a casualty of caregiving. And progress, if it is truly inclusive, must account for life beyond the boardroom.

The last rolling memory of the City of Joy

Santhosh Mathew

Which is the only city in India where trams still run? It is Kolkata. But that is not its only distinction. It is also the only city in Asia where an electric tram service, born in the 19th century, still survives on active tracks. On February 24, 2026, Kolkata celebrated 153 years of its tramways - a system that began on February 24, 1873, when horse-drawn carriages clattered along iron rails between Sealdah and Armenian Ghat Street. Those early trams moved at a humble three miles per hour, introduced during the tenure of Lord Ripon. What started as a slow, horse-pulled novelty would go on to become one of the defining features of the city. As a Malayali traveller stepping onto the streets of Kolkata, I did not see the tram merely as a mode of transport. I saw it as a moving museum, a breathing relic of India's layered urban history. The tram here is not just steel and wire; it is sentiment and memory. In 1902, under the supervision of the

Calcutta Tramways Company, electric trams began running between Esplanade and Kidderpore, and between Esplanade and Kalighat. The city's face changed forever. The tram network expanded steadily, connecting Kolkata and Howrah - twin cities divided by the Hooghly yet bound by commerce and culture.

The growth of Howrah as one of India's busiest railway complexes owed something to this silent, steady connector. At its peak, Kolkata's trams operated along 25 routes. Today, barely six remain. Around 15,000 commuters still depend on them, choosing this cheapest and most environmentally friendly form of transport over the city's chaotic traffic. There was a time when trams were not unique to Kolkata. Madras, Bombay, Baroda, Nasik, Kanpur, and Patna - all had their tramlines. In 1895, India's first electric tram ran in Madras. Between 1930 and 1970, tram services flourished across these cities. But gradually, one by one, they shut down - victims of financial losses,

epidemics, falling passenger numbers, and the rising dominance of motor vehicles.

Even Kerala had a tramway. The Cochin State Forest Tramway operated from 1907 to 1963, transporting teak and timber from the forests of Parambikulam to Chalakudy. It was an industrial tram, not a passenger service, but it remains part of our forgotten transport history. Bombay electrified its tram system in 1907 under the Bombay Electric Supply and Tramways Company (BEST). Delhi had trams until 1963; Bombay until 1964. Madras ended its service in 1953 after bankruptcy. Patna became the first Indian city to close its tram service as early as 1903. Nasik shut down in 1933 following famine and plague.

Today, Kolkata stands alone. The tram service is now directly managed by the West Bengal Transport Corporation. Yet it survives in what can only be described as a prolonged gasp between life and death. Critics argue that tramlines obstruct modernisation, occupy valuable road

space, and slow down traffic on already congested roads. Many tracks have been covered with tar because removing them entirely would be too expensive. In some places, the rails peek through the asphalt like faint palm lines - reminders of a destiny the city once embraced.

When I visited the Gariahat tram depot, it felt like walking into an abandoned ancestral home. Rusted tracks, blue-and-white tramcars resting in silence, and a haunting stillness told stories of a glorious past. In the 1980s, traveling by tram in Kolkata was a dignified experience - slow, breezy, and affordable. Today, those same carriages appear like relics awaiting judgment. Kolkata was once called the City of Joy - a phrase immortalised by Dominique Lapierre and later popularised globally.

Now, many whisper a different description. After decades of political turbulence, industrial stagnation, and what critics call ideological rigidity, the city seems trapped in a cycle of economic fatigue. Youth are

leaving in large numbers - migrating to Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, even abroad - in search of opportunity. The tram's fading blue paint mirrors the fading confidence of a generation.

As a Malayali, I cannot help but compare Kolkata's tram story with Kerala's own transport debates. In our cities, we rush toward flyovers, metro rails, and highways. We rarely pause to preserve heritage mobility. In Kolkata, modernisation has often meant erasing tracks rather than integrating them. Yet, when I boarded a tram from Esplanade, something magical happened. The vehicle moved gently, almost meditatively. Unlike buses that roar or taxis that weave aggressively, the tram glided with restraint. It allowed me to observe the city - colonial facades, old bookstores, tea stalls, street debates - at human speed. The tram does not hurry. It remembers. On its 153rd anniversary, the state transport department organised "Tramjatra," attracting tram enthusiasts even from Germany and Australia. That global

affection contrasts sharply with local apathy. For outsiders, Kolkata's tram is romance. For many residents, it is an inconvenience. But perhaps the tram's slow pace is precisely what this restless century needs. In an era of climate crisis, electric public transport from the 19th century seems surprisingly futuristic. Long before sustainability became fashionable, Kolkata's trams were already eco-friendly. The deeper question is not whether trams slow traffic. It is whether a city that erases its memory can sustain its soul.

Kolkata's tram is more than transport. It is testimony to colonial engineering, to post-independence optimism, to socialist planning, to decline, and to resilience.

The dark shade of the tram cars reflects a darker narrative of West Bengal's political and economic journey. But within that darkness lies continuity. As I stepped off the tram near Howrah, watching the wires crisscross the grey sky, I felt both nostalgia and unease.