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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

REFORMING WAQF GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: A LEGAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This studies paper severely examines the ancient evolution, felony framework, and modern demanding situations of the Waqf gadget in India, a unique group rooted in Islamic jurisprudence that allows charitable endowments for religious and social welfare. Tracing its origins from early Islamic practices to its institutionalization below the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule, the paper explores how colonial skepticism and publish-independence reforms have formed its contemporary governance below the Waqf Act, 1995 and next amendments. The observe delves into current traits between 2020 and 2025, along with digitalization efforts, legislative reforms, and landmark criminal disputes consisting of the Gyanvapi and Shahi Idgah instances. those issues are analyzed within the context of increasing communal tensions, administrative inefficiencies, and questions surrounding constitutional secularism. through case studies and judicial precedents, the studies highlights the systemic demanding situations of encroachment, mismanagement, and political interference that retain to undermine the organization's capability. It concludes by providing a framework for reforms emphasizing transparency, inclusive governance, and balanced regulatory oversight, aiming to repair Waqf's original undertaking of promoting socio-financial justice and communal harmony in a pluralistic democracy.

Keywords: Waqf, Wakf, Islamic endowments, Muslim charitable trusts, Waqf Act 1995, Waqf Amendment Bill 2024, Waqf Amendment Bill 2025, Central Waqf Council, State Waqf Boards, Waqf tribunals, encroachment, mutawalli, Waqf by usage, Waqf-alal-aulad, Places of Worship Act 1991, constitutional secularism, socio-economic justice, Muslim minority in India, Waqf property disputes, Gyanvapi Mosque case, Shahi Idgah dispute, Delhi Waqf Board vs Indian Railways, GIS mapping, digitalization, WAMSI portal, Delhi Sultanate, Mughal Waqfs, colonial-era Waqf laws, post- independence reforms, comparative Waqf governance.

Introduction

Concept and Etymology of Waqf

In Islamic jurisprudence, Waqf (plural: Awqaf) indicates the permanent dedication of belongings for charitable or non secular purposes. Derived from the Arabic root “waqafa,” meaning “to prevent” or “to hold nonetheless,” Waqf represents an act of booking an asset—movable or immovable—for enduring social or spiritual desirable. traditional Islamic jurists view it as inalienable belongings entrusted to Allah (SWT), with its benefits special for particular causes or beneficiaries. As an instrument of non-stop charity (sadaqah jariyah), Waqf promotes wealth redistribution and socio- financial justice, awesome from compulsory almsgiving (zakat), being completely voluntary and influenced by means of faith and desire for divine reward.

Origins and Evolution

In Islamic jurisprudence, Waqf (plural: Awqaf) indicates the permanent dedication of belongings for charitable or non secular purposes. Derived from the Arabic root “waqafa,” meaning “to prevent” or “to hold nonetheless,” Waqf represents an act of booking an asset—movable or immovable—for enduring social or spiritual desirable. traditional Islamic jurists view it as inalienable belongings entrusted to Allah (SWT), with its benefits special for particular causes or beneficiaries. As an instrument of non-stop charity (sadaqah jariyah), Waqf promotes wealth redistribution and socio- financial justice, awesome from compulsory almsgiving (zakat), being completely voluntary and influenced by means of faith and desire for divine reward.

Waqf in the Indian Subcontinent

Waqf become brought to India with the advent of Islam, flourishing at some point of the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule. one of the earliest instances was Sultan Muizuddin Sam Ghaor’s willpower of villages to Jama Masjid of Multan. Mughals notably accelerated Waqf endowments, investment mosques, academic institutions, and charitable offerings. however, colonial rule added skepticism. British courts, unfamiliar with Islamic jurisprudence, criticized Waqf as a “perpetuity of the worst type” (Abdul Rahim v. Narayan Das). local resistance caused the enactment of the Mussalman Wakf Validating Act, 1913, safeguarding the group.

Post-Independence Legal Framework

After independence, India hooked up statutory mechanisms to alter Waqf. The Waqf Act of 1954 created kingdom Waqf boards (SWBs) for management, accompanied by means of the significant Waqf Council (CWC) in 1964 for oversight. The Waqf Act of 1995, a complete reform, supplied a robust criminal basis, defining Waqf and placing approaches for registration, dispute decision thru committed tribunals, and shielding properties from misuse. The 2013 change further strengthened the Act via promoting inclusivity, especially with the mandated illustration of ladies, and prolonged rent intervals for commercial viability whilst prohibiting the sale of Waqf belongings.

Socio-Economic Importance

India has over 4.9 lakh registered Waqf homes protecting almost 6 lakh acres, with a market valuation exceeding ₹1.2 trillion. but, the go back on these belongings remains minimal—around 2.7% of their ebook value—because of encroachments, administrative inefficiencies, and political forget about.

nicely controlled, these belongings should yield over ₹12,000 crores annually, allowing huge-scale welfare initiatives along with scholarships, healthcare, and network infrastructure. Waqf hence holds transformative potential for addressing the socio-monetary demanding situations of Indian Muslims.

Objectives of the Research

Despite its vast potential and long-standing history, the Waqf institution in India faces numerous challenges—from legal ambiguities and bureaucratic inefficiency to encroachments and political interference. Recent years (2020–2025) have seen renewed attempts to digitize, modernize, and reform Waqf administration through legislative measures and policy interventions, including the Waqf (Amendment) Bills of 2024 and 2025 (Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. (2024), Central Waqf Council Reports).

This research paper aims to:

- Trace the evolution of the Waqf institution in India,
- Analyze the existing legal and administrative framework,
- Examine recent developments (2020–2025),
- Assess the socio-political implications of Waqf governance, and
- Propose recommendations for transparent, efficient, and community-centered reform.

Legal Framework of Waqf in India

Waqf in India has evolved through a complex prison trajectory formed by means of colonial skepticism and post-independence regulatory efforts. described under section 3(r) of the Waqf Act, 1995, waqf involves everlasting willpower of movable or immovable belongings for non secular, pious, or charitable purposes as recognized under Muslim regulation.

Colonial-Era Legislation

The Mussalman Wakf Validating Act, 1913

The earliest statutory recognition came through the Mussalman Wakf Validating Act of 1913, passed in response to the Privy Council's criticism of family Waqfs as "perpetuities of the worst kind"

(Central Waqf Council Reports). The Act legitimized Waqf-alal-aulad (family Waqf), allowing Muslims to dedicate property for the benefit of descendants while preserving the ultimate charitable character. This was a watershed moment, reinforcing the Islamic legal distinction between personal benefit and ultimate divine ownership.

The Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923 & Validating Act, 1930

The 1923 Act aimed to introduce administrative safeguards such as mandatory accounting, audit requirements, and trustee accountability. However, it lacked enforcement power. The 1930 Validating Act reaffirmed the 1913 Act's legitimacy, reinforcing the legal sanctity of family Waqfs (Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. (2024)).

Post-Independence Developments

The Waqf Act, 1954

With the creation of State Waqf Boards (SWBs), the Waqf Act of 1954—India's first post-independence Waqf law—centralized governance. In each state, these statutory authorities were entrusted with the registration, oversight, and protection of Waqf properties (Rasool, 2019). Under this Act, the Central Waqf Council (CWC) was established in 1964 to provide government advice and facilitate coordination among State Boards.

The Waqf Act, 1995

Recognizing limitations in the 1954 Act, Parliament enacted the Waqf Act, 1995, which remains the cornerstone of Waqf administration today. Key features of the 1995 Act include:

- **Statutory Definition:** Section 3(r) offers an inclusive definition of Waqf, recognizing various forms including Waqf by user, Shamlat properties, and Waqf-alal-aulad.
- **Creation of Waqf Tribunals:** Exclusive quasi-judicial bodies to adjudicate Waqf disputes, reducing burden on civil courts (Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. (2024)).
- **Central and State Roles:** The Act institutionalized a two-tiered system with State Waqf Boards exercising functional authority, while the Central Waqf Council retained an advisory role.
- **Registration and Survey:** Mandatory registration of all Waqf properties and periodic surveys were introduced to ensure transparency.

The 1995 Act explicitly barred the alienation of Waqf properties except under prescribed conditions and reinforced the fiduciary duties of mutawallis (trustees).

Amendments to Strengthen the Framework

The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2013

This amendment introduced several progressive reforms:

- **Enhanced Representation:** Required two women members on each State Waqf Board.
- **Tenure and Leasing:** Extended the lease term of Waqf properties for commercial purposes from 3 to 30 years to encourage economic utilization.
- **Prohibition on Sale:** Explicitly prohibited sale or gifting of Waqf properties, even for infrastructural development.
- **Professionalization:** Made provision for the appointment of experts in law, finance, and town planning as board members to enhance institutional capacity (Rasool, 2019).

Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and 2025

In response to administrative inefficiencies, encroachments, and rising litigation, the government introduced new legislative proposals:

Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024: Focuses on improving registration, digital governance, and transparency. It also proposes redefining certain legal terms to remove ambiguity (Central Waqf Council Reports).

Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025: Seeks to repeal outdated laws and harmonize the legal regime. It emphasizes the need for GIS-based mapping, integration with land records (DILRMP), and technology-driven asset management (Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. (2024)).

Institutional Structure

Relevant Waqf Council (CWC): A statutory advisory frame under the Ministry of Minority Affairs, tasked with tracking SWBs and beginning development schemes like QWBTS and SWSVY.

Country Waqf boards (SWBs): deal with registration, leasing, safety, and dispute resolution at the country stage. but, numerous boards face mismanagement, political interference, and corruption.

Waqf Tribunals: installed beneath phase eighty three of the 1995 Act, these tribunals are meant to offer quick adjudication but suffer from frequent delays and operational gaps.

Key Challenges

In spite of a sturdy legal framework, implementation stays vulnerable:

- **Encroachments:** Over 70% of waqf houses are illegally occupied.
- **Sales Loss:** Returns from waqf lands are a long way beneath ability because of mismanagement.
- **Virtual Lag:** no matter digitization efforts, many states lag in updating belongings statistics.
- **Governance Gaps:** Conflicts between centralized oversight and country autonomy persist.

Key Recent Developments (2020–2024)

India's Waqf assiduity has seen a rush of activity between 2020 and 2024, characterized by legal reforms, high- profile land conflicts, digitalization systems, and enhancing political contestation.

These changes are being in the environment of calls for openness and indifferent governance, the need for advanced asset operation, and growing scrutiny of religious means. The most important developments during this time are examined in this part, together with their ramifications for Waqf institutions and the larger sociopolitical discussion.

Digitalization and GIS Mapping of Waqf Properties

One of the most transformative initiatives accepted in recent times is the digitalization of Waqf properties, commanded by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under the Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme (QWBTS). The government, through the Central Waqf Council, aimed to

computerize Waqf records and integrate them with GIS- grounded mapping under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP). The scheme includes

- Development of the Waqf Management System of India(WAMSI) portal,
- Integration with land profit systems for geo- tagging Waqf plots,
- Creation of a central digital registry of parcels,
- Enhancing translucency and precluding encroachments.

By 2023, over 2.5 lakh Waqf parcels had been digitized(Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025.(2024)). This action is seen as a major step toward updating Waqf governance, although state-position prosecution varies significantly. Some countries like Telangana and Karnataka made fast progress, while others lag before due to regulatory detainments, resistance from vested interests, or lack of specialized capacity.

Legal and Legislative Reforms: Waqf Amendment Bills (2024 & 2025)

Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024

Introduced in Parliament in August 2024, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes crucial reforms to address loopholes in the Waqf Act, 1995. Its main objects include

- Redefining" Waqf" to remove ambiguities,
- Standardizing the registration process across states,
- Empowering boards to take suo moto action in cases of encroachment,
- Promoting technology- grounded governance through obligatory digital record-keeping,
- Strengthening responsibility of mutawallis(Explainer, 2024).

The Bill also seeks to streamline dispute resolution mechanisms by making Waqf Tribunals more accessible and efficient, with faster disposal timelines and revised qualifications for members.

Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025

The proposed 2025 Bill, tabled for committee review, further aims to:

- Consolidate outdated laws such as the Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923,
- Expand Central Waqf Council's oversight powers,
- Introduce penalties for mismanagement or dereliction by Waqf officials,
- Enhance the role of civil society organizations in monitoring and reporting

irregularities (Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. (2024)).

Both amendments reflect an effort to strike a balance between autonomy of religious institutions and the need for regulatory accountability.

High-Profile Waqf Land Disputes

Gyanvapi Mosque Case

After a local court permitted a survey of the mosque grounds next to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in 2022, the Gyanvapi Mosque issue in Varanasi—possibly the most politically delicate matter in recent memory—resurfaced. The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board defended the site's status as a functioning mosque under Waqf protection, while petitioners asserted that the location originally housed a Hindu temple.

The matter escalated to the Supreme Court, which permitted continued legal proceedings under strict procedural safeguards. The case is emblematic of a growing trend where historical Waqf properties are being contested on religious and archaeological grounds (Indian Express, 2022).

Shahi Idgah – Mathura Dispute

The Shahi Idgah Mosque in Mathura, which is close to the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple, is the subject of a related disagreement. Hindu associations filed a action in 2023, professing that the deity's home was being illegally occupied. According to the U.P. Waqf Board, the mosque has a legitimate title and is located on Waqf land. The ongoing proceedings have reignited collaborative pressures and brought Waqf laws into the center of a polarizing public debate.

These cases punctuate the difficulties in striking a balance between property rights, historical claims, religious freedom, and judicial restraint.

Delhi Waqf Board vs. Railways Dispute

Administratively speaking, the Delhi Waqf Board suffered a major blow in 2022 when the Ministry of Railways repossessed 123 Waqf properties, including graveyards, mosques, and dargahs, claiming that there was no documentation to prove Waqf ownership. Without a clear title, the Central Government contended that these lands couldn't be claimed as Waqf because they were bought under the Railways Act.

The Delhi Waqf Board challenged this decision in court, claiming that numerous properties had previously been acknowledged as Waqf properties and were still in continuous religious

usage. The administrative battle between secular government officials and religious organizations over land and documents is highlighted by the lawsuit, which is still unresolved (The Wire, 2023).

Karnataka's 2023 Survey Controversy

A survey of assets claiming historical conversion or Waqf status, particularly those connected to Hindu temples, was initiated in 2023 by the Karnataka State Waqf Board. Right-wing organizations and political rivals fiercely criticized this action, accusing the Board of overreach and intrusion.

Ultimately, the Board clarified that the survey was based on existing records and was not intended to take control of functioning temples.

However, this incident rekindled public criticism of Waqf boards' authority, especially in multireligious environments, and prompted a legislative debate in the state legislature. The episode highlighted the need for clear legal boundaries as well as the political unpredictability surrounding Waqf management.

Economic Utilization and Commercial Projects

A number of state boards have collaborated with private organizations to build hospitals, schools, and commercial complexes on Waqf property after realizing the financial potential of these holdings. In order to meet the Islamic goal of charitable utility and maintain financial viability, these endeavors seek to produce a steady stream of revenue for the Waqf. For instance:

Joint ventures with real estate developers have been started by the Telangana and Karnataka Boards. Under the Shahari Waqf Sampatti Vikas Yojana (SWSVY), several boards are exploring public- private partnerships (PPPs) for the development of urban property (Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. (2024)).

Critics, however, advocate for more robust due diligence and public participation procedures and warn of potential corruption, undervaluation, and loss of community authority.

Judicial and Public Debates

Recent years have also witnessed growing judicial intervention and public discourse around the scope and fairness of Waqf laws. Legal scholars and political commentators have raised questions about:

Alleged preferential legal treatment of Waqf vis-à-vis other religious trusts (e.g., Hindu temples under state control), The need for uniform regulation across religious institutions, Whether Waqf law aligns with constitutional principles of secularism and equality.

Some commentators argue for reforming the Waqf structure to resemble charitable trusts governed by common civil law, while others defend its distinctive religious roots and community-led nature (Owais, 2023; Abdullah, 2020).

Critical Analysis & Debates

Governance Challenges: Centralization, Corruption & Legal Gaps

- Waqf's governance in India has been tainted by centralization, inefficiency, and misuse, despite its foundation in Islamic ideals and community service. Concerns about federalism and local autonomy have been raised by post-2013 reforms that have enhanced central monitoring through the Central Waqf Council. State-specific differences in Waqf policies are frequently disregarded, and discussions concerning bureaucratization and openness have been heightened by more recent amendments (2024–25).
- At the same time, corruption and invasion are still commonplace; it is estimated that more than 70% of Waqf holdings are either underutilized or unlawfully occupied. Poor results are caused in part by mutawallis and local officials working together, political meddling, and inadequate documentation. Waqf Tribunals, which are supposed to provide prompt justice, frequently have lengthy vacancies, delayed rulings, and a dearth of legal knowledge, placing impacted parties in a state of legal uncertainty.

Socio-Political Tensions & Majoritarian Narratives

- Waqf institutions have become entangled in broader political narratives, with accusations of preferential treatment compared to Hindu religious bodies. Perpetual dedication regulations, exclusive tribunal jurisdiction, and purported exemptions from land laws are cited by critics. There is growing support for calls for a unified legal system for all religious trusts.
- Scholars contend, however, that Waqf's particular legal status is justified by its distinctive religious foundation and that excessive governmental intervention may infringe upon Article 26 constitutional protections. Inconsistencies are brought to light

by comparisons with Hindu temple administration, but they also emphasize the necessity of equitable accountability rather than necessarily uniform supervision.

Representation, Reform & the Road Ahead

- Despite legal provisions for inclusive governance—such as mandatory representation of women—actual implementation is weak. Women, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, remain underrepresented as mutawallis and board members. Genuine reform requires more than symbolic gestures.
- Looking forward, reforms must strike a balance between autonomy and accountability. Proposals include creating an independent regulatory authority, mandating external audits, restructuring tribunals, and promoting professional training. Strengthening community participation and transparency is key to reviving Waqf's original mission of social justice and public welfare.

Legal Analysis of Waqf Disputes in India: Case Studies and Judicial Precedents

Waqf properties in India have been at the center of numerous legal controversies that cross religious rights, property laws, and historical claims. These cases frequently involve complex questions of power, encroachment, and the interpretation of Islamic endowments under secular legal frameworks. This paper examines significant case studies and landmark judgments that have shaped the justice surrounding Waqf parcels, pressing their legal, social, and political implications. By analyzing these disputes, we gain insight into how courts balance religious endowments with contemporary property laws while addressing communal perceptivity and administrative challenges.

Case Studies: Contemporary Waqf Disputes

1. Delhi Waqf Board vs. Indian Railways: The Challenge of Documenting Religious Endowments

The Indian Railways' recapture of 123 properties, which include dargahs, mosques, and graveyards, prompted a conflict with the Delhi Waqf Board. The conflict arose from the post-Independence land records. The Waqf Board contested this claim on the basis that these properties had been custodial for decades for religious purposes. The Board used the principle based on 'Waqf by usage' as noted under Section 3 (r) of the Waqf Act, 1995 which allows for

endowments based on longstanding religious usage even in the absence of formal legal documents.

The dispute brought to light the legal balance regarding proof of claim within Waqf disputes. The Railways presented sanctioned land acquisition record, while the Waqf Board relied on oral accounts, community activity, and historical possession of land. The courts had to deal with the intersection of property law during colonial times and the deep-rooting religion significance within the contested land. Highlighted within ongoing unreasonable court case battles is the systematic need for processing Waqf properties and showcasing the fragility of religious endowments towards development discourse initiated by the government.

2. Karnataka Waqf Board's Property Survey: Communal Tensions and Legal Scrutiny

In 2023, the Karnataka Waqf Board started a state-level survey to record and authenticate Waqf properties, based on colonial revenue records and physical visits. The survey revealed a number of contentious sites, some of which were claimed by Hindu groups to be temple lands. This was followed by a lot of criticism, with allegations that the Board was acting beyond its powers and trying to capture non-Waqf lands.

The row became political as protesters called for judicial intervention of the surveying process. The state government suspended the survey later, citing the imperative of a more transparent and participatory methodology. This is an example of the art of striking the right balance between administrative thoroughness and communal peace. It also calls into question the credibility of historical records to determine modern property rights and how Waqf Boards can run religious endowments without worsening interfaith relations.

3. The Gyanvapi and Shahi Idgah Disputes: History, Faith, and Legal Interpretation

The Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura have become symbolic of India's troubled religious property disputes. Hindu pleaders claim that the mosques were erected on the ruins of razed temples, whereas Muslim stakeholders hold fast on their legal position as Waqf properties. The cases have pushed the boundaries of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, that bars the conversion of the religious character of places as it existed in 1947.

In the Gyanvapi case, a 2022 court-directed survey is said to have unearthed remains of a

Hindu temple, resulting in fresh calls for the relocation of the mosque. Similarly, the Shahi Idgah dispute concerns allegations of the mosque taking up land critical to the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple complex. These cases underscore the convergence of archaeology, religion, and law, with courts struggling to try historical complaints against the backdrop of constitutional secularism. The controversies may establish precedents for the way India manages similar controversies in the future.

Landmark Judgments in Waqf Jurisprudence

1. Abul Fata Mahomed Ishak v. Rasamaya Dhur Chowdhuri (1891)

This case in the colonial period determined whether a family Waqf, for the most part for descendants with only nominal provision in the future for charity, constituted a valid religious endowment. The Calcutta High Court held against its validity on the grounds that Waqfs had to have immediate and material religious or charitable purposes. The ruling exemplified British judicial skepticism of perpetual family trusts and resulted in the Muslim Waqf Validating Act, 1913, which subsequently established the legality of family Waqfs under Islamic law.

2. Masjid Shahid Ganj Mosque v. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, (1940)

The Privy Council decision in this matter set that long-standing non-Muslim possession of a Waqf property had the effect of divesting it of its religious character under the doctrine of limitations. The court also refused to acknowledge mosques as juristic persons with the ability to sue, in contrast to Hindu idols. The ruling uncovered weaknesses in Waqf safeguards and shaped future controversies regarding preservation of religious endowments.

3. M. Siddiq (D) Thr Lrs v. Mahant Suresh Das & Ors, (2020)

The Ayodhya judgment of the Supreme Court was a pioneering one, with the court giving the contested plot to Hindu claimants and assigning alternative land to Muslims for the construction of a mosque. The court prioritized archaeological findings and legal title over religious claims, establishing a precedent for how courts could treat similar disputes. Yet it also generated arguments regarding the fair treatment of religious communities in property disputes.

4. Delhi Waqf Board vs. Govt. of NCT of Delhi (2023)

Here, the court rejected a petition of illegal construction on Waqf land following the filing of

an FIR by authorities and committing to vigilance. The judgment highlighted the judiciary's inclination towards administrative remedies in cases of encroachment, affirming the role of state machinery in the resolution of Waqf disputes.

Conclusion

The Waqf institution, an Islamic charitable and legal endowment, has long functioned as a cornerstone of communal well-being, learning, and religious endurance in Muslim societies. In India, its development has been particularly influenced by centuries of religious cohabitation, colonial politics, and contemporary constitutional rule. Now, Waqf exists as a potent emblem of communal self-determination as well as a contested sphere of land, law, and legitimacy.

This paper has mapped the history of Waqf, analyzed its legal construct, explored contemporary developments, criticized administrative limitations, and provided an analysis of milestone case studies. The analysis presents a system characterized by phenomenal potential but systemic underachievement. India has one of the world's largest Waqf property networks—over 4.9 lakh registered locations covering 6 lakh acres, with a market value of over ₹1.2 trillion (Abdullah, 2020). However, very little of this is actually put to use for its original charitable and community-oriented purposes.

The challenges are multi-layered:

- Legal ambiguities surrounding ownership and registration,
- Administrative inefficiencies, poor documentation, and corruption,
- Politicization of Waqf Boards and mutawalli appointments,
- Encroachments, both private and institutional,
- Communal tensions, often exacerbated by high-profile land disputes,
- Judicial delays due to non-functional tribunals or inadequate legal training.

In spite of these challenges, recent events between 2020 and 2024—like the digitalization push, Waqf Amendment Bills, GIS mapping, and commercial reforms—have brought a sense of urgency and potential to the Waqf debate. These reforms can potentially bring Waqf governance into the modern era, safeguard community assets, and revive public confidence. But legal innovation is not sufficient; Waqf's success lies in a harmonious blend of faith, law,

and good governance.

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