

CHAPTER IV

FIELD ORGANISATIONS OF THE COLLECTORATE

The various powers and duties of the Collector cannot be executed merely in the District Collectorate. The District Collectorate is the headquarter while the Sub-Divisions, Talukas, Circles and Sazas are its field agencies. The line authorities in the revenue administration viz. The Additional Collector, Resident Deputy Collector, Sub-Divisional Officer, Tahsildar, Naib-Tahsildar, Circle Officer and Talathi have been vested with powers under the MLRC, 1966 and under the various Acts and Rules. No work in the Collectorate can be accomplished without the help of these line agencies.

As observed by B.B. Misra "His (Collector's) time should not be occupied with the details of magisterial, police, revenue, fiscal or any other business to a degree which will debar him from watching the effect produced on the people by the operations of all the departments of Government. The Collector..... should administer details chiefly through his assistants"¹.

In Nashik District, there are four Sub-Divisions each under charge of a Sub-Divisional Officer. The Sub-Divisions consist of 13 Talukas each under charge of a Tahsildar. The Talukas are further divided into 70 Circles each under charge of a Circle Officer. The Circles are further divided into 545 Sazas each under charge of a Talathi. A saza may consist of one or more villages. Thus, the revenue department has a well organised hierarchy upto the village level. The officers of the Revenue Department constitute not only the 'eyes and ears but even hands of the Government'² in the district.

The organisational structure, duties and functions of the field organisations of the Collectorate viz. Sub-Division, Taluka, Circle and Saza have been discussed in this Chapter.

1. SUB-DIVISION

The district is geographically divided into units known as sub-divisions in U.P., Maharashtra and M.P., revenue divisions in Tamil Nadu. The Officer in charge of this unit is called the Sub-Divisional Officer (S.D.O.) in Maharashtra Sub-Divisional Magistrate (S.D.M.) in U.P., Revenue Divisional Officer or Sub-Collector in Tamil Nadu³. Before 1966, the unit was called as Prant in Maharashtra and the officer as Prant Officer.

The S.D.O. exercises all the powers and has to perform all the duties and functions of a Collector in relation to the Sub-Division in his charge unless the Collector has otherwise directed.⁴

Till 1990, the Sub-Division in Maharashtra on an average consisted of 4 talukas. The Pimputkar Committee⁵ had observed that the work of 4 talukas keep a Prant Officer busy for more than 10 hours a day, and as such recommended that a Prant of 3 talukas would be more appropriate. The Bongirwar study group, in 1987, supported the same. In 1991, 14 new Sub-Divisions were created in Maharashtra. In Nashik District Kalwan Sub-Division was created as the fourth Sub-Division comprising Kalwan, Surgana and Baglan talukas. At present in Nashik District Nashik is the only Sub-Division consisting of 4 talukas while other Sub-divisions consist of 3 talukas each.

When a newly appointed I.A.S. Officer is given the charge of S.D.O. he is designated as the Assistant Collector and when the S.D.O. is from the State Civil Service he is designated as the Deputy Collector.

Organisation of Sub-Divisional Office:

The Sub-Divisional office is organised with a limited staff. The Sub-Divisional Officer is assisted in his work by 3 Aval Karkuns. One of them is designated as the Shirastedar. He acts as a co-ordinator of all branches and superintendent of office. The remaining two Aval Karkuns shoulder the charge of Tenancy and Employment Guarantee Scheme branches independently.

The number of clerks varies from office to office. In Nashik S.D.office there are 4 clerks while in Niphad S.D.office the number of clerks is 3. Though their designations are Jamabandi Clerk, Magisterial Clerk, Establishment Clerk and Treasury Clerk they are also assigned other work. In addition to above staff one short-hand typist, one driver and 3 peons are appointed.

Functions and Powers of S.D.O.:

i) Supervision of Taluka and Village administration:

The S.D.O. has to ensure that the Tahsildars, Naib-Tahsildars, Circle Officers, Aval Karkuns and Talathis are properly exercising the powers delegated to them under various Acts and implementing the government orders correctly. In addition to this he has to ensure that civil supplies matters are being carried out efficiently in his sub-division. He has to be on tour for 150 days in a year with 80 night halts so that he can acquaint himself with the needs of the people and redress their grievances. He acts as ears and eyes of the Collector⁶.

ii) **Inspection:** The SDO has to inspect the tahsil offices from his sub-division thoroughly at least once in a year. Inspection of other offices viz. daftar inspection of one circle officer and one Aval Karkun or clerk of each taluka per month, two village inspections of Talathi offices and two 'A' audit inspections of talathi daftars are also conducted by the Sub-Divisional Officer. This helps in keeping proper control over the work of Talathis especially in maintaining village record and check in misappropriating government money.

iii) Establishment of Talathis, Police Patils and Kotwals:

The SDO is the appointing authority in respect of Talathis, Police Patils and Kotwals in the Sub-Division. The powers of transfers, departmental enquiries, suspension, dismissal, maintenance of confidential report files and leave orders of these employees are vested in him.

iv) Magisterial Powers:

The SDO is also a Sub-Divisional Magistrate. He has to decide a number

of original as well as appeal cases under various Acts.

- a) Record of Rights cases under MLRC, 1966 - 12 cases per month to be decided.
- b) Boundary Mark Cases under MLRC 1966 section 242 - 4 to 5 cases per month.
- c) Appeals under Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1948⁷ - 8 appeal cases per month.
- d) Exemption cases u/s 55 to 57 of Bombay Police Act, 1951.
- e) Cases under Agricultural Lands Ceiling Act, 1975.
- f) Proceeding under Bombay Prohibition Act.
- v) **Grant of Non Agricultural Permission :**

In Nashik District, the powers to grant N.A. Permission in Class II villages have been delegated to the SDO.

- vi) **Verification of Khate Pustika:**

At the time of village inspection the SDO is expected to verify whether the village officer has prepared and issued Khate Pustika to all the Khatedars.

- vii) **Crop Cutting Experiments:**

To determine paisewari, the SDO has to conduct 3 crop cutting experiment of Kharif and rabi crops separately in each tahsil. Similarly he has to supervise the crop cutting experiments conducted by the Circle Officers.

- viii) **Recovery of Govt. Dues:**

At the time of village daftar inspection, the SDO has to see whether the talathi has recovered the govt. dues from the Khatedars as per govt. orders.

- ix) **Land Acquisition:**

The SDO is the land acquisition officer for extension of village goathan⁸, burial or cremation grounds and also for other public purposes as per directions of the Collector.

- x) **Regularisation of Encroachments:**

The proposals for regularisation of encroachment on government land are forwarded to the Sub-Divisional Officer. With the approval of District Collector he passes the orders of regularisation of encroachments.

xi) Connecting link between tahsildar and the Collector:

The SDO also works as a connecting link between the Tahsildar and the Collector. The monthly diaries of the Tahsildar are forwarded to the Collector through the SDO. Many proposals of land revenue matters are also forwarded to the Collector through him. During the scarcity conditions, he has to take necessary steps to give relief to the people. To handle the situation of law and order he is vested with powers as specified in part IV of schedule III of the Criminal Procedure Code⁹.

Except for the appeal cases, people do not come in contact with the Sub-Divisional Office. Most of the matters are settled at the Tahsil level. Haridwar Rai has rightly observed that¹⁰ "The Sub-Division, it is found, has always remained a field area of revenue and law & order administration which has been usually regarded as a training ground for the fledgling District Officers.... The channels of communication between the tahsil and District do not pass through the sub-division except in matters relating to revenue and criminal administration".

Taking into consideration the role of SDO, the Administrative Reforms Commission recommended that "along with extensive delegation of authority to the SDO, there should be a complete integration of tahsil and sub-divisional administration. In the case of bigger tahsils, the sub-division can be made co-terminous with it. For smaller ones, a sub-division can consist of more than one tahsil, depending on the workload. The Tahsildar should deal only with the SDO., and except for the submission of routine reports and returns, he should have no direct correspondence with the Collector"¹¹.

The Study Group under the leadership of Shri.Bongirwar observed that the Sub-Divisional Officer is overburdened and is becoming ineffective in

discharging the functions expected from him. In order to strengthen the institute of Sub-Divisional Officer and to make him effective as a field administrator, the study group recommended that the number of talukas in a Sub-Division should be reduced to a uniform norm of two talukas¹² for a Sub-Division.

2. TALUKA OFFICE

For the administration of revenue, the Sub-Divisions are further divided into Talukas. In Maharashtra 31 Districts, 106 Sub-Divisions and 325 Talukas¹³ were in existence in 1994.

In old Bombay region and Marathwada a district was divided into talukas. In Vidarbha, a district was divided into tahsils. Under MLRC 1966, a tahsil is not recognised but is treated as a taluka. A taluka in Bombay and Marathwada is smaller in area than a tahsil (now taluka) in Vidarbha. The former heads of taluka offices Mamledars have become Tahsildars since the implementation of the Code¹⁴.

Till 1967, there were 11 talukas and 2 Mahals¹⁵ in the Nashik District. On 10th August, 1967, Govt. of Maharashtra declared that all existing mahals in the districts of Bombay area of the State shall be talukas accordingly¹⁶. Therefore, the number of talukas in Nashik District became thirteen.

Appointment of Tahsildars:

Accordingly to the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966, the power of appointment of Tahsildar is vested in the State Government. However, since 1969, the powers of appointment and transfer of Tahsildars and above the rank of Tahsildars were delegated to the Commissioners¹⁷. Till 1947, the posts of Tahsildar were filled in through promotion. The Karve Committee recommended that 50% of the posts in the cadres of Tahsildars and Deputy Collectors should be reserved for direct recruits.

The candidates passing the Maharashtra Public Service Commission examination undergo training at YASHDA Pune (Yashwantrao Chavan

Development Academy) for a period of one year and then they undergo probationary period of 6 months on expiry of which they are appointed as Tahsildars.

Though the Tahsildar is the head of revenue office in the Taluka, unlike Collector he is expected to carry out various functions under different Acts relating to law and order, supply, co-ordination, scarcity etc. At the Taluka level he is individually responsible for various subjects. At the time of visit of V.I.P.s the co-ordination of various officers is required. Tahsildar was Class II officer while other officers were of Class I status. The lower status of Tahsildar was a hindrance in achieving co-ordination. Therefore, the State Government raised the status of Tahsildar as Lower Class II officer¹⁸ from 1992.

Naib-Tahsildar:

In the revenue hierarchy, the post of Naib-Tahsildar (N-T) is subordinate to the Tahsildar. He is appointed to assist the Tahsildar in his duties. The establishment of Naib-Tahsildar is controlled by the Commissioner. On the basis of seniority and good confidential report the N-Ts are appointed by the Commissioner but specific portfolio is allotted to them by the Collector. One of the N-Ts is appointed as Resident Naib-Tahsildar (RNT). The RNT is not required to perform touring duty, therefore, he is available at the headquarters during office hours.

Delegation of Powers:

The Tahsildar has powers of supervision, inspection and control of the subordinate revenue officers. Apart from the powers granted under the code, the Collector may delegate powers of 35 sections of MLRC, 1966 to the extent mentioned in the notification.¹⁹

Tahsildar is also the Executive Magistrate of the Taluka. He is the appointing authority to the inferior village servants like Kotwal. He is the superintendent of the Taluka Sub-Jail²⁰. In the land revenue administration, the Circle Officers and Circle Inspectors assist him in supervision and control over

the talathis and Kotwals who are directly in contact with the people.

Tahsildar supervises the collection of land revenue at the taluka level. The crop cutting experiments to determine paisewari of villages are also performed under his supervision if there is any dispute about it. The proceedings before the Tahsildar in the capacity of revenue court, in matters of Record of Rights, Tenancy or Magisterial subjects are quasi-judicial proceedings.

During scarcity conditions, the Tahsildar becomes an important point of reference at the taluka level. Many a times he had assumed the position of a transmitter and distributor of information and instructions to the Block Development Officer and Deputy Engineers of the Zilla Parishad. Being in constant touch with the Collector, he had come to enjoy some kind of reflected authority which was accepted by B.D.O. and Deputy Engineer²¹.

Branches of Tahsildars Office:

For the sake of administration, the Tahsildars office is divided into branches each under control of a Naib-Tahsildar or Aval Karkuns assisted by clerks. In Nashik District, following branches are in existence at the Tahsildar's office.

- i) **Revenue and Maglsterial Branch:** This branch is generally kept under the control of R.N.T. and no Aval Karkun is appointed in this branch. Jamabandi, Record of Rights, Encroachment, Minor Minerals, issue of caste, income and creamy layer certificates, matters under criminal procedure code are the subjects dealt with in this branch.
- ii) **Supply Branch:** One of the Naib-Tahsildar is head of this branch assisted by two Aval Karkuns, supply inspector, godown manager and a clerk. In Nashik taluka, there is a separate establishment for supply matters within the Municipal Corporation area. Taluka office deals with rural area only.
- iii) **E.G.S. Branch:** The Employment Guarantee Scheme is implemented in Maharashtra under the supervisory control of revenue officers. In Nashik District, every tahsil has formulated the EGS branch. Head of this branch is

Naib-Tahsildar who is assisted by a Aval Karkun and a clerk.

iv) **Sanjay Gandhi Yojana Branch:** A Naib-Tahsildar is the head of this branch. The number of Aval Karkuns and clerks to be allotted to this branch depends upon the workload of the scheme in the Taluka.

v) **Treasury Branch:** Head of this branch is Treasury Aval Karkun assisted by one or two clerks. Along with the function of collection of treasury bills, paybills of the Tahsil staff, he has to look after the establishment, inwards-outward and record of Taluka Office.

vi) **Election Branch:** Generally this branch is in charge of Aval Karkun and a clerk. Before the election to the Parliament and State Legislature, temporary post of Naib-Tahsildar is created and additional staff if required is diverted from other branches. After election, the post of election N-T is abolished and the person is either demoted or transferred elsewhere if the post of N-T is vacant.

The number of clerks and aval karkuns varies from tahsil to tahsil. The staffing pattern of 4 selected tahsils during 1993-94 is shown in the following table.

Table 4.1* : Staffing Pattern in Four Talukas Of Nashik Dist.

Category of staff	Nashik	Niphad	Sinnar	Peint
Tahsildar	1	1	1	1
RNT	1	1	1	1
N-T.	4	4	3	3
A.K.	6	5	4	4
Clerks	17	14	13	8

From Table 4.1 it is noticed that in all the Talukas the Tahsildar is assisted by RNT. The number of Naib-Tahsildars varies from Tahsil to tahsil. In Nasik and Niphad Tahsils it is four while in Sinnar and Peint Tahsil it is three. The number of A.K. is highest in Nashik taluka. Due to excessive load of election work, two A.K.s and four clerks are appointed in this branch. In case of Sinnar and Peint the number of A.K. is 4 each. Excluding the

Peint Tahsil, the ratio of A.K. to clerks is 1:3. In Peint Tahsil, 10 posts of clerks have been sanctioned but due to less work at Peint, two clerks are asked to work at Nashik Tahsil.

Reorganisation of Tahsil Office:

The Bongirwar Study Group appointed by Govt. of Maharashtra in 1987, recommended that the Tahsil Office should consist of 5 branches. The traditional names have been changed and terminology with broader perspective has been used. The 5 branches are 1) Public Service Branch 2) General Branch 3) Executive Branch 4) E.G.S. Branch 5) Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana Branch.²²

The revenue staff from Collector's office to the level of Talathi is always involved in the work of election every year for some period. It is, therefore, suggested that Election Branch should be added to above five branches and permanent staff should be appointed for it. During no election period, the staff should be directed by the Tahsildar to clear the pendency of other branches.

Of the three levels of administration, it is observed that powers are concentrated at the District Level and Sub-Divisional level. For conversion of use of land, for appeal people are required to go to the Sub-Divisional Officer or the Collector. To avoid delay, it is necessary that more powers should be delegated to the Tahsildar. As recommended by the Administrative Reforms Commission²³ "At the level of Tahsildar also, it is essential that maximum delegation of powers should be made to him. This will relieve the S.D.O. of his routine work and enable him to concentrate on his touring and inspection duties. Further, the Tahsildar and his deputies should be required to dispose of a maximum of revenue and miscellaneous case work while on tour. This will give considerable relief to the general public, who will not have to come to the tahsil headquarters for petty matters".

Aval Karkuns and Clerks in Revenue Administration:

Previously the Collector was empowered to appoint clerks required in the

revenue administration of the district. Later on, these powers were transferred to the District Selection Board. Since the abolition of these boards there is no selection for the post of clerk. A special recruitment scheme was implemented for the candidates of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and wards of freedom fighters. The selection was done by the Committee consisting of Collector, Additional Collector, RDC and Chitnis.

There is no provision of training for the selected candidates. They are expected to learn all the works of revenue department under the supervision and guidance of Aval Karkun and head of the branch. The clerk is transferred to various tables and gains the knowledge of procedure of revenue work.

The services of clerk are not confirmed till he passes the Sub-Service Departmental Examination. (S.S.D.Exam.). The examination is held once in a year and 3 chances are given to appear. In exceptional cases 2 more chances are given. Failing to pass the SSD Exam. results into stopping further increments. The clerks are promoted as Aval Karkuns on the seniority basis.

RQT Examination: For all officers above A.K., the condition for promotion is passing Revenue Qualifying Test (RQT) conducted by MPSC. Permission is obtained from the Divisional Commissioner and one has to pass it, in 3 attempts failing to which all further promotions are stopped.

The power to appoint and transfer the revenue officers of and below the rank of Aval Karkuns are exercisable by the Collector within their respective districts.

3. REVENUE CIRCLE

The revenue areas constituted below the level of taluka are 'Revenue Circles' and 'Sazas'. Each taluka is divided into revenue circles (on an average 5 to 6 circles per taluka) each in charge of a Circle Officer and each revenue circle is further divided into 'Sazas' (each consisting of 1 to 8 villages) in charge of a talathi.

Prior to 1981 some of the Sazas had as many as 15 villages and it was difficult for cultivators to visit the talathi office. In 1981-82, therefore, the Government undertook reorganisation of sazas on the basis of certain criteria such as the number of Khatedars, land revenue, population, occupied land etc.²⁴. After reorganisation in Maharashtra the number of sazas increased to 12637 and revenue circles to 1394²⁵.

Organisation of Revenue Circle:

The head of revenue Circle is called Circle Officer. Till 1994, head of some of the circles were called Circle Inspectors. They were not empowered to certify the mutation entries of Record of Rights. This resulted into pendency of certification of entries which caused great inconvenience to the farmers. Therefore, the Government of Maharashtra upgraded all the posts of Circle Inspectors to the post of Circle Officers.²⁶ The counterparts of this post in Tamil Nadu is called as Revenue Inspector and in U.P. as Superior Quanungo. He is in charge of revenue administration and land records of every village within his area.

Appointment of Circle Officer:

The Circle Officer is appointed by the Collector on the basis of seniority from the talathis as well as from the clerks of revenue department. In April 1995, the posts were declared to be reserved only for talathi cadre. Due to this decision of the government, the chances of promotion for the clerks were reduced. Therefore, the revenue servants went on strike and Government agreed to recruit the Circle Officers from Talathis and clerks on the seniority basis.²⁷ There is no provision of training for Circle Officers. A brief description of revenue circles and sazas in Nashik District is presented in the following table.

Table 4.2: Revenue Circles and Sazas in Nashik District and 4 Selected Talukas

	Nashik Dist.	Peint Taluka	Sinnar Taluka	Niphad Taluka	Nashik Taluka
Rev.Circles	70	3	4	7	8
Sazas	545	28	39	55	50
	*(1:8)	(1:9)	(1:10)	(1:8)	(1:6)
Villages	1791	179	128	131	138
	** (1:3)	(1:6)	(1:3)	(1:2)	(1:3)
Khatedars	411430	17715	42003	17250	56809
Fixed Land Rev.	171000	7864	295221	291974	034425

* Figures in these parentheses indicate ratio of Circle to Sazas

** Figures in these parentheses indicate ratio of Saza to villages.

It could be observed from Table 4.2 that the ratio of Circle to Sazas for Nashik District is about 1:8. In Peint and Sinnar Taluka due to less number of khatedars and land revenue the ratio is 1:9 and 1:10 respectively. In case of Niphad and Nashik Tahsil it is 1:8 and 1:6 respectively. The ratio of Sazas to villages is 1:6 in case of Peint Taluka, 1:3 for Sinnar and Nashik Taluka and 1:2 for Niphad Taluka.

The span of work of Circle Officer in Peint Taluka is 60 villages, Sinnar 32 villages, Niphad 19 villages and Nashik 17 villages.

Duties and Functions of Circle Officers:

The Circle Officer is expected to reside in the village fixed by the Collector as the headquarters of the Circle. They are appointed to assist the Tahsildar and Naib-Tahsildar in exercising proper supervision over the village servants and to make local inquiry of every kind promptly.

The Circle Officer certifies the entries of Record of Rights, and thus relieves the Tahsildar of a good deal of routine work. He is an important link between talathi and Tahsildar²⁸. His duties and functions can be classified into following categories.

1) **Concerning Revenue:** Inspection of works for which loans have been

granted through revenue agency, to ascertain that the conditions attached with such grants or loan are observed by the concerned persons, to test receipts of land revenue paid and other dues by oral examination of the farmers and to ascertain the remittance to the treasury are duly made by the talathi.

ii) **Inspection of Lands:** The Circle Officer shall detect encroachments and unauthorised occupation of any Government land, to ensure that government waste land is not unauthorisedly brought under cultivation or used for any purpose, to inspect and repair the boundaries and survey marks, to ensure that the conditions of regranted inam or watan lands are observed properly, to perform crop cutting experiments for determination of paisewari and to check survey number and sub-division (*hissa*) to test the recording of the Talathi.

iii) **Control of the work of Talathis:** The Circle Officer is expected to ensure that the Talathis reside at their respective headquarters of the saza. He has to ensure that all rules and regulations are observed by Talathis in their work. He is responsible to train Talathis from his circle, in the ways and procedure of performing their duties. He should inspect the record of Talathi to ensure that all necessary records have been forwarded to the tahsil office for recording. He should make entry of every visit or inspection in his own diary as well as in the diary of the Talathi.²⁹

iv) **Inspection of Village Records:** Circle Officer should ensure that talathis maintain all the registers and village forms properly. He has powers to certify the mutation entries of record of rights. While certifying, he should observe that there is no breach of any Act of tenancy, ceiling, succession, prevention of fragmentation and conditions of impartible tenure. All disputes regarding succession and mutation entries should be disposed by him. He should also verify the crop entries and live stock entries.

v) **Reporting About Natural Calamities:** The Circle Officer is expected to report to the Tahsildar, the Sub-Divisional Officer and the Collector the occurrence of natural calamities such as flood, frost, hailstorm, locust swarm,

epidemic, disease relating to human beings or animals and failure of crops in villages in their circles and send a rough estimate of loss due to such calamities. During scarcity conditions, the Circle Officers are expected to perform such functions relating to relief measures as may be entrusted to them by the State Government or by their superior officers³⁰.

vi) **Touring and Maintainance of Diary:** The Circle Officer shall ordinarily tour for 20 days in a month and make atleast 15 night halts outside his headquarter. He should communicate, his touring programme in advance to the Tahsildar and Taluka Inspector of Land Records (T.I.L.R.) every fortnight, indicating villages in which he expects to be working on each day of the following fortnight.

Circle Officer has to forward his monthly diary in the prescribed proforma to the Tahsildar before 5th of every month. It is forwarded to the T.I.L.R. with his remarks to the Sub-Divisional Officer and with his remarks it is returned to the Tahsildar. The Circle Officer should note the remarks and submit the same to records. As observed in the Gazetteer of Maharashtra State "The Circle Officers Supervise the work of village officers but their technical work of maintenance of land records at the village is supervised by the District Inspector of Land Records (now TILR) and therefore their diaries are forwarded through him³¹.

In addition to this, the Circle Officer may be entrusted by the Collector to carry out such special and general duties relating to revenue and general administration of the district³².

4. SAZA

'Saza' means a group of villages in a taluka which is constituted by the order of the Collector³³. Talathi is in charge of a saza consisting of 1 to 8 villages and in some cases upto 15 villages. In 1981, the State Govt. appointed the Capoor Committee for reorganisation of sazas. The Committee

recommended reorganisation of sazas on following bases³⁴.

Bases of No. of Sazas In a Taluka:

- a) One Saza per every 500 Khatedar (40%)
- b) One Saza per every 1800 Hectares area (30%)
- c) One Saza per every Rs. 800 land revenue (10%)
- d) One Saza per every 3000 population (10%)
- e) One Saza per every 4 villages (10%)

In Nashik District 70 Circles and 545 Sazas were organised. In different states the counterpart of Talathi is known by various names viz. in Bihar as Rajaswa Karmachari, in the Hindi speaking states as Patwari and in Assam as Mouzdar. He is the key figure in the field co-ordination and can exert considerable influence upon the district administration.³⁵

A village is the lowest land revenue unit under the M.L.R.C. 1996. The local area comprised in each village is published by notification in the official gazette. The average number of villages in a Saza in charge of Talathi varies from taluka to taluka. It is evident from Table 4.2 that a Talathi, in Peint Taluka has on an average charge of 6 villages, in Sinnar and Nashik Taluka 3 villages and in Niphad Taluka 2 villages.

Appointment of Talathi: The District Collector is the appointing authority of Talathi, however, this power is delegated to the Sub-Divisional Officer. Minimum qualification required for the post of talathi is S.S.C. The selection of the candidates is done by the Selection Board. No formal training is given to talathi. The selected candidates are first appointed as Additional Talathi for six months and then they are given independent charge of a Saza. For confirmation of service, talathi is required to pass the Sub-Service Departmental (S.S.D.) examination within 4 years from the appointment.

The maximum period of appointment at one saza is 5 years. Talathi may be transferred by Sub-Divisional Officer before completion of this period. The transfers of talathi from one sub-division to another are effected by the order

of Collector.

Duties and Functions of Talathi:

In the hierarchy of revenue officials of the District, Talathi is the last official in the line agency. The day to day contact of the people for land revenue and many other purposes comes with talathi. He has to perform multifarious functions as mentioned in the Maharashtra Land Revenue Manual Vol.IV. The total number of functions mentioned in it. is 65³⁶. The functions can be classified into two broad categories as revenue function and non-revenue functions.

A Revenue Functions:

- i) **Collection of Revenue** : The functions performed by Talathi under MLRC, 1966 are revenue functions. Talathi is responsible for assessment and recovery of land revenue and other cess which are recovered as arrears of land revenue. He has to give receipt of the same. The collection is to be remitted in the treasury within 15 days and to give recurring account of the total recovery made so far to the Tahsildar below the treasury receipt (*chalan*).
- ii) **Maintenance of Registers and Records:** Talathi has to maintain various village forms from Village Form (V.F.) I to Village Form XVI which includes following main registers viz. a) Record of Rights and Register of Crops b) Register of Mutations, c) Register of Tenancies, d) Register of holdings. After certification of the entries by the Circle Officer he has to make necessary change in the V.F. VII-XII as per procedure mentioned in the Rules.
- iii) **Inspection of Crops and Lands:** Talathi is expected to inspect holdings and record the entries of Kharif crops, tenancy, boundary and survey marks. He has to assist the Circle Officer in crop cutting experiments to be performed for determination of paisewari. He has to report the cases of encroachment and unauthorised use of land to the C.O. and Tahsildar. He has to confirm that names of holders and tenants coincide with the record, sub-divisions of survey number are entered in records, there is no breach of any Rule or

Act in effecting transactions of land and sources of supply of irrigation are shown properly in the village map.

iv) **Issuing Copies of Village Forms and Registers:**

On demand of the villagers Talathi is expected to issue, within 24 hours, the copies of village forms, records or entries, after taking the copying fee and should maintain account of the same. On receipt of application from holder or tenant of the land, he has to supply him the 'Khate Pustika' (Revenue Account Book) as per rules made therefor.

v) **Reporting:** Talathi is expected to report about the natural calamities like flood, fire, scarcity, epidemic, locust swarm etc. to the Circle Officer and Tahsildar. He has to maintain a visit book and present the same on demand by the officers. For 'Jamabandi' audit he has to take all the necessary village record to the Taluka Office.

B. Non-Revenue Functions: Talathi is also responsible for performing non-revenue functions on receipt of order from District Collector. It includes preparation and issue of ration cards, collecting information of stock of corn from farmers, making provisions for monopoly procurement of grains from farmers. He has to maintain a levy register and send demand notices to farmers, work as a godownkeeper of civil supplies in hilly & remote areas, preparation of electoral rolls, extend co-operation to the election officers in conduct of election, to achieve target of small savings scheme and extend co-operation to the officers, to extend co-operation to the concerned officers to celebrate prohibition week, *Harijan Saptah* etc.

Moreover by various notifications functions have been entrusted on the Talathi viz. target of family planning, census, literacy campaign and any other kind of work assigned by the Tahsildar during the scarcity period.

The functions performed by the Talathi at the village level are so important that S.S. Khera calls him as the king-pin of the revenue administration. In his words "Any one who either comes from a village or has

lived in a village or has had anything to do with village especially concerning the land or agriculture, will appreciate what is meant when we say that a Patwari is the King-pin of the revenue administration in the district".³⁷

In the villages where literacy rate is low, advice of Talathi is sought on every matter. About his role S.N. Sadasivan has rightly observed that "Land has always been a major cause of conflict between individuals, groups and nations. In a predominately agricultural country like India, it has not been only the prime source of wealth and determinant of social powers but also the main motivation behind the recurring blood feuds in the village and the endless litigation in which often the hands of lumberdar & patwari are subtly hidden".³⁸

Attitude of People Towards Talathi:

To study the attitude of the people towards Talathi, the 2 respondents from each selected villages were asked to state the various types of village level workers. The list obtained includes Gramsevak, Police Patil, Nurse, Talathi, Patkari (Canal Inspector) and Secretary of Co-operative Society. To the question "Whom do you feel to be the most important village level worker? Why?" the following response was observed.

Table 4.3 : Respondents' Identification Of Most Important Village Level Worker

Category	Frequency	Percentage of frequency
Talathi	21	65.6%
Gramsevak	4	12.5%
Patkari	7	21.9%
Total	32	100%

It could be observed from Table 4.3 that 65.6% of the respondents think that Talathi is the most important functionary at the village level. In support of their answer they stated that land is means of their livelihood. The writings of Talathi are considered as writings of God. His remark on the record of rights or his advice to the persons having adverse interest in the land may

cause trouble to the land holder. The applications for various schemes of loan are forwarded through him. Ration cards are obtained from him. In Adivasi Areas, though the lands are distributed free of charge by the Government, the credit is given by the people to the talathi. Only 4 respondents i.e. 12.5% said that the Gramsevak is the most improvement functionary because, house record is maintained by him and schemes of agricultural improvement sanctioned by Zilla Parishad are implemented by him.

In irrigated areas, primacy was given to the Patkari by 21.9% respondents as in their opinion there was no value to the land without provision of water supply.

Residence of Talathi :

Talathi is expected to reside at the headquarter of the saza allotted by the Sub-Divisional Officer. The absence of the Talathi in his office is related with the non-residence of Talathi in the village where headquarter of saza is located. The respondents were asked "Whether Talathi resides in your Village?" Their responses are given in the following table.

Table 4.4: Respondents view about residence of Talathi and Circle Officer at their headquarters.

Response	People	C.O. & Talathi
Yes	06(18.75%)	10 (41.7%)
No	24 (75%)	14 (58.3%)
D.K.	02 (6.25%)	00
	N = 32	24

It could be observed from Table 4.4 that 75% of the respondents from people are of the view that Talathis do not reside at their headquarters about 58% of the C.O. and Talathis admitted the same. Don't know answer was given by the respondents from urban area.

To a supplementary question asked to the C.O. and Talathis about their

non-residence at the headquarters 'Why?' following responses were received
i) Lack of residential quarters and civic amenities in the villages ii) Non availability of educational facility iii) Ownership of house at the taluka place
iv) Trying for transfer.

It was observed that generally the talathis reside at the taluka headquarter or at the headquarter of the revenue circle if school, water, roads etc. infrastructures are available.

Separate office buildings are also not made available for Talathi Offices. At many places it is organised by sharing the office room of village Panchayat or Co-operative Society. In some villages, a part of temple or the verandah of *Chawadi* is used as Talathi Office. There is need of building quarters and offices for Talathis and Circle Officers. Heble Commission³⁹ has rightly observed that "If the Collector is the District Administrator, the Talathi works as Collector's man in the village and, therefore, revenue work is not the only legitimate work of the Talathi. The workload of Talathis has no doubt increased considerably in recent years. It is necessary to provide Talathi residential accommodation in the saza. In many places, the Talathis do not even have an office room to function from. Office room must be provided in every saza for the Talathi." The recommendation, however, was not accepted by the Government on account of paucity of funds.

Spot Observations: To collect data from sazas the researcher had to visit the place twice or thrice on account of non-availability of the Talathi in Office. Very surprisingly, at some places, it was observed that talathi had appointed some person as his assistant on fixed pay of Rs. 300 to Rs.500 per month. These unauthorised appointments were found to be convenient from view of the people. When people visit the talathi office for obtaining copies of various village forms, in absence of talathi, the assistant used to issue them the required copies on the forms which were signed by talathi in advance.

Excluding Peint Tahsil, everywhere, the fee charged for copy of village

form VII-XII ranged from Rs. 4 to Rs.5 though the authorised rate was Rs.1.50. Nobody was found complaining about it. On the other hand they have the feeling of obligation that they have received the copies from "Tatya".

It was also found that at some places separate Talathi Office or Circle Office was built from the public collection. The public collection means the surplus amount charged by Talathi while issuing copies of forms and registering entries. The assistants appointed by them were also paid from the same fund.

Kotwal:

To assist the village level Government functionaries Kotwals are appointed. Before independence the post was hereditary and in return of the services rendered by them lands without charging any land revenue were allotted to them called 'Watan'. After abolition of Watans in 1958, Kotwal became a full time salaried servant of the Government.

Recruitment: The powers of recruitment of Kotwal have been vested in the Tahsildar. Any person residing in the village having record of good character and age between 18 to 40 years was appointed as Kotwal of that village. The age of retirement of Kotwal is 60 years.

On the basis of census of 1971, the posts of Kotwal were fixed for each Taluka. For Nashik District total sanctioned posts of Kotwal were 1900⁴⁰.

Ban on Recruitment of Kotwal: Since 1977, Government discontinued the new recruitment of Kotwals. In 1983, Gholap Committee was appointed by the Govt. to suggest norms, duties etc. of Kotwals. The embargo on filling the posts of Kotwal was continued till further orders⁴¹. The ban is not lifted as yet.

In Nashik District out of 1900 posts only 1060 posts were filled up and remaining 840 posts were kept vacant. The salary of Kotwal was fixed to Rs.600 on 1st Oct. 1989 and was to be increased by Rs.150 on 1st March of every year⁴².

The Gholap Committee recommended that Kotwal should not be allowed

status of Class IV employee and that their demand for pay and allowance at par with Class IV employee and pensionary benefit should not be accepted.⁴³

Functions of Kotwal: The Gholap Committee enumerates a list of 21 duties to be performed by Kotwal. Broadly following are the main functions of Kotwal.⁴⁴

- i) Calling people during Govt. recovery drive, especially during the recovery drive of the Revenue Department.
- ii) Publication of various Govt. Orders from time to time either by beat of drum or by publication of notice on notice board.
- iii) Assisting the Police Patil in the police function which may include informing incidents in the village to the Police Station or the Tahsil headquarters and similar other magisterial functions including informing the Talathi in case of natural calamities.
- iv) Assisting Talathi in his various functions.
- v) Maintaining the village *Chawadi*.
- vi) Assisting any other Govt. servant who visits the village.

As the salary of Kotwal is paid through Tahsildar he is mainly considered as functionary of revenue department to assist Talathi. In absence of any assistant, the Talathi has to perform one man show of maintaining office, inviting people, issuing notices etc. which consumes much more time resulting into pendency of work.

It is necessary to appoint 2 kotwals per saza irrespective of population. One will work at the headquarter of saza and another at the village office with largest population in the saza.⁴⁵

GENERAL OBSERVATION:

Field organisation is a relative term with reference to the location of headquarter. If the District Collectorate is the headquarter the Sub-Division, Taluka, Circle and Saza are its field organisations. The revenue administration performs the various functions through field agencies.

In Nashik District there are 4 Sub-Divisions as Nashik, Niphad, Kalwan and Malegaon. The Nashik Sub-Division consists of 4 talukas while remaining sub-divisions of 3 talukas. The staff of this office, which consists of 3 to 4 A.K.s. and 3 to 4 clerks, is very limited.

Due to growing functions the S.D.O. is becoming ineffective in discharging the duties expected from him. The Bongirwar Study Group had therefore recommended that a Sub-Division should consist of two talukas each. To relieve the SDO from overburdening, it is also suggested that the Shirastedar should be appointed from cadre of Tahsildar.

Below Sub-Divisional Office there is Taluka Office headed by Tahsildar. He is Class I Officer appointed through competitive examination conducted by the M.P.S.C. or promoted and transferred by the Divisional Commissioner. Tahsildar is assisted by 3 to 4 Naib-Tahsildars, 4 to 6 Aval Karkuns and 8 to 16 clerks. From view of decentralisation of administration, the Collector's powers of about 40 sections, of M.L.R.C. 1966 have been delegated to the Tahsildar. The Tahsildar is also the Executive Magistrate of Taluka and appointing authority to the inferior village servants like Kotwal.

Unlike his superior officers, Tahsildar is also vested with powers of various subjects viz. land revenue, supply, e.g.s., magisterial, inspection and supervision of the work of Talathis and Circle Officers, quasi-judicial powers of revenue and magisterial casework, co-ordination at the taluka level, election, representative of Govt. at the Taluka level etc. It was observed that there is no provision of training for the clerical staff in the revenue department. The clerks learn the procedure of work under the guidance of their Aval Karkuns.

To increase the effectiveness of the work of Taluka office, it is suggested that, the election branch should be a permanent branch of Taluka office with adequate staff which may be diverted in other branches to control pendency during the no election period.

Each taluka is divided into revenue circles each circle headed by a Circle

Officer. He is appointed by the Collector on the basis of seniority from talathi and clerks. He has to keep control over the revenue work of 6 to 10 Talathis working in his Circle. Circle Officer forms an important link between talathi and Tahsildar. Inspection of talathi offices is his most important work. He has to train the talathis in revenue work and provide them guidance. The mutation entries of record of rights are certified by him. For performing crop inspection and crop cutting experiments he has to visit every village from his circle, therefore, he is expected to be on tour for 20 days in a month. He has to forward his monthly diary to the Sub-Divisional Officer through tahsildar before 5th of every month. The provision of forwarding diary creates indirect check over the work of Circle Officer.

Each Circle is divided into Sazas, consisting of a group of villages, under the charge of Talathi. In Nashik Dist. there are 545 talathis having average charge of 3 villages per head. Apart from collection of land revenue, maintenance of registers and records, inspection of lands, issuing copies of village forms he is responsible for a number of non-revenue functions as issuing ration cards, election work, preparation of electoral rolls, family planning, small savings, literacy campaign, census, and any other function assigned by superior officers. The functions performed by Talathi at the village level are so important that he is called as the King-Pin of the revenue administration.

Responses to the questionnaire revealed that majority of the respondents (65.6%) identified talathi as the most important village level worker. He is expected to reside in the village identified as the headquarter of the saza. However, 75% of the people stated that Talathi was not residing at the headquarters and about 60% of the respondents from the category of Circle Officers and Talathis also agreed with it.

At some places, talathis have appointed assistants who are trained to supply the copies of various villages forms. People are ready to pay more charges if quick service is provided.

To assist Talathis, Kotwals are appointed by Tahsildar. For Nashik Dist. 1900 posts of Kotwal were sanctioned in 1971, but due to ban on recruitment of Kotwal, Only 1060 posts were filled in and 840 posts remained vacant. He performs important revenue function of calling people to the *Chawadi* (Talathi Office) and publication of Govt. orders by beat of drum, maintaining *Chawadi* and assisting Police Patil in the police or magisterial functions.

Absence of Kotwal in the saza creates one man show of Talathi who is already overburdened with work. It is suggested that in each saza there should be 2 kotwals one to be appointed at the headquarter of the saza and another at the village office with largest population in the saza.

The field organisation of the Collectorate is a very important organisation performing various functions assigned to the District Collectorate. At all the levels of the field organisation the functions assigned to the field officers are so enormous that they are finding it difficult to cope up with them. Efforts therefore, should be made for reducing the burden of their work by increasing the number of the offices viz. Sub-Division, Saza etc.

The functions which have continuity such as election should have a permanent staff at the taluka level. Surprisingly training facilities are not provided at the lower level. Therefore, in order to increase the effectiveness of the staff training should be imparted at the lower level.

The Talathi is the backbone of the Revenue administration. As a grass root functionary, he has to perform very important function and he directly comes into contact with the people. Still it appears that many of them are indulging into malpractices such as appointing men for giving copies of the records, intentional delay etc. This has to be stopped again by fixing the work norms for him, making him accountable, providing training facilities and strengthening the vigilance organisation.

REFERENCES

- 1) B.B. Misra, *The Administrative History of India*
(Oxford University Press, 1970) p.497
- 2) S.S.Gadkari, *Organisation of the State Government in Maharashtra*
(Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1990) p.119
- 3) Shriram Maheshwari, *Indian Administration*
(Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi, 1968) p.238
- 4) *Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966* (M.L.R.C., 1966)
(as modified upto 1st August 1987) Land and
Judiciary Dept., Bombay 1987, Govt. of Maharashtra. S.13(4)
- 5) *Report on the Reorganisation of District Revenue Offices 1959*
(Chairman - M.G.Pimputkar) Govt. of Bombay, 1959 p.19
- 6) *Ibid* p.18
- 7) *Bombay Tenancy And Agricultural Lands Act 1948*
(Govt. of Bombay, 1948) S.24(2)
- 8) *Report on Reorganisation of Maharashtra Administration Vol. I*
(Commissioner - M.N.Heble)
Govt. of Mah. Bombay 1971 Para 40.11 p.527
- 9) K.S. Desai, *Problems of Administration In Two Indian Villages*
(M.S.Univ.Baroda, 1961) p.9
- 10) Haridwar Rai, "Areas of Field Administration in India" -
in *Aspects of Democratic Govt. & Politics in India*
by (Eds) K.P. Bombwell & L.P. Choudary,
(Atma Ram & Sons, New Delhi. 1968) p.351
- 11) *Report of the Study Team on District Administration Vol.I*
Govt. of India, Administrative Reforms Commission
(Chairman-Takhatmal Jain) (Delhi 6 - 1967) para 265 p.84
- 12) *Report of the Study Group Regarding Scientific Study on*
Reorganisation of Revenue Activities (Ch. - A.L. Bongirwar)

- (G.O.M., R & F Dept., Bombay 1987) para 6.56 p.100
- 13) G.O.M., *Performance Budget 1993-94*
(Revenue & Forest Dept. Govt. Press Nagpur 1993) p.5
- 14) *MLRC - 1966* S.337(2)
- 15) Mahal - a unit smaller than taluka was in existence in the
Bombay State specially in the hilly and Tribal area.
Head of this unit was designated as Mahalkari.
- 16) GOM, *Notification*. R & F Dept. No. TLC, 1967 - 11484 'C'
Dt. 10th August, 1967
- 17) GOM., *Notification* PWR, 1068/80227, Dt. 12-2-1969
also in Mah.Govt.Gazette Part IV B Dt. 6-3-1969 p.300
- 18) GOM., R & F Dept. *G.R.No.* MIS-1193/ 4065/CR 102/E
Mantralaya Bombay 32, Dt. 29March 92.
- 19) GOM.,*Notification*,R & F Dept. UNF1467-(e)-R,Dt.14th Aug.1967
- 20) K.S. Desai, *op.cit.* p.9
- 21) A Avasthi, and S.P. Ranga Rao (Eds),*Crisis Administration in India*
(Sterling Publishers, New Delhi,1983) p.44
- 22) Bongirwar Study Group Report - *op.cit* P.84
- 23) *Report of the Study Team On District Administration op.cit.*, p.84
- 24) S.S.Gadkari, *op.cit.*, p.120
- 25) *Performance Budget 1993-94 op.cit.*, p.6
- 26) GOM., *GR* No. C-1091/C.R. 779-E-7,Dt. 15th Oct. 1994
- 27) GOM., *G.R.* No. C-1095/CR-368-E7,Dt. 21 Nov. 1995.
- 28) K.S.Desai,*Patterns of AdministrationIn Two Indian Villages*
(Dept. of Polic. Sci., M.S.University, Baroda,1961) p.10
- 29) *Maharashtra Land Revenue Manual (M.L.R.M.) Vol.IV*
Chapter III. Duties of Circle Inspector.
(R & F Dept. Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1973) Para 1 p.34

- 30) *The Maharashtra Land Revenue Circle Officers and Circle Inspectors (Duties and functions) Rules, 1970 Rule 4*
also in the M.L.R.M. Vol. I. p.46
- 31) *Maharashtra State Gazetteer Nashik District*
(Revised Edition 2nd) Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1975 p.678
- 32) M.L.R.M. Vol. IV, *op.cit.*, p.46
- 33) M.L.R.C. 1966, *op.cit.* s.4
- 34) Bongirwar Study Group Report 1987 *op.cit.*, p.57
- 35) S.N. Sadasivan (Ed.) *Dist. Admn. A National Perspective*
(IIPA., New Delhi, 1988) p. 22
- 36) M.L.R.M. Vol. IV, *op.cit.* pp.28-33
- 37) S.S.Khera, *District Administration in India*
(Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1979) p.38
- 38) S.N. Sadasivan, *op.cit.* p.528
- 40) *Order of Collector, Nashik District Desk IV, WTN/680 A/79,*
Nashik Dt. 8.5.1979 According to this order posts
of Kotwal were fixed for each taluka.
- 41) GOM., *DO.No. KOT-1083/CR-5 1/83/E-9, R & F Dept.*
Bombay 32. Dt. 3rd Feb. 1983
- 42) GOM., *G.R.No.KOT/1089/No.3/8/89/E-10, Dt. 10 Jan. 1990*
- 43) GOM., *G.R.No. KOT-1082/503/82 E/0 R & F Dept.*
Mantralaya, Bombay 32, Dt. 24 Feb. 1983.
- 44) *Bongirwar Study Group Report, 1987 op.cit.*, para 2.5 p.13
- 45) *Ibid* p.15