

A Study on the Hierarchical Framework of Land Revenue Administration in Punjab

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Abstract:

The land revenue administration in Punjab was structured to efficiently manage land-related matters, revenue collection, land records maintenance, and dispute resolution. The organizational structure can vary over the time due to administrative changes and reforms. Here's a general overview of the organizational structure of land revenue administration in Punjab. India does not have a uniform Land Revenue Code that applies across the entire country. The land revenue laws and regulations are typically governed by individual states and union territories. Each state in India has its own Land Revenue Act that governs matters related to land ownership, land use, land records, and land revenue collection. These acts outline the legal framework for the land tenure, rights and administration within the state. Each state has its own or similar legislation outlines for land revenue. The specifics of these acts can vary widely from state to state.

Keywords:- land revenue administration, land revenue, organizational structure.

Introduction:-

The Department of Revenue, Rehabilitation & Disaster Management is headed by the Financial Commissioner Revenue, who is also Additional Chief Secretary to Government of Punjab in respect of Revenue Department. The State of Punjab is divided into five divisions namely; Jalandhar, Patiala, Roopnagar, Ferozepur and Faridkot and each division is headed by the Divisional Commissioner. Divisions are divided into Districts, which are headed by the Deputy Commissioners, who also exercises the powers of Collector and Registrar under Indian Registration and Stamp Acts. Districts are divided into Sub-Divisions, Tehsils and Sub-Tehsils. Sub Divisions are headed by Sub Divisional Magistrates, Tehsils are headed by Tehsildars and Sub-Tehsils are headed by Naib Tehsildars. There are 23 districts, 93 Sub-Divisions, 93 Tehsils and 87 Sub-Tehsils in the State of Punjab¹.

Land Revenue Administration in Punjab:-

Punjab Land Records Society is a society recognized (under Registration of Societies Act, 1860) by the Government of Punjab to prepare strategies, policies, procedure and to assist the State Government and Government of India in the effort to provide well-organized and prompt services in the public matters, relating to land and revenue, through the use of Information Technology and its related fields. The main

¹ <https://revenue.punjab.gov.in>. (assessed on 22-12-2022)

objective of the Punjab Land Records Society (PLRS) is to supervise, monitor the execution of computerization and digitization of Land Records and related documents in Punjab for the overall benefit of the society and to make available Land Records related services through various common access infrastructures like Sukhmani Centres to the public. This Society is a State level body being constituted in particular to deal with the Land Records in all its dimensions and would work under the overall policy agenda of Punjab State E- Governance Society (PSEGS)².

The land revenue administration in Punjab, India, was structured to efficiently manage land-related matters, revenue collection, land records maintenance, and dispute resolution. The organizational structure can vary over time due to administrative changes and reforms. Here's a general overview of the organizational structure of land revenue administration in Punjab:

- **Revenue Department:-** The Revenue Department at the state level is responsible for overseeing the land revenue administration and related matters. It formulates policies, guidelines, and regulations for land revenue collection, record maintenance, and administration.
- **Board of Revenue:-** The Board of Revenue is the highest administrative authority in land revenue matters in Punjab. It provides guidance, policy recommendations, and supervision for revenue administration across the state³.
- **Financial Commissioner Revenue:-** The Financial Commissioner Revenue is a senior officer who oversees the entire land revenue administration in the state. They provide overall direction and guidance to revenue officials, ensure proper implementation of policies, and manage disputes and appeals.
- **Inspector General of Registration and Stamps:-** This office is responsible for overseeing property transactions, including registration and stamp duty collection. It plays a role in revenue collection when properties are bought, sold, or transferred.
- **Divisional Commissioner:-** Punjab is divided into five divisions, each headed by a Divisional Commissioner. These commissioners oversee the revenue administration within their respective divisions, ensuring the implementation of policies and proper collection of land revenue.
- **Deputy Commissioners:-** Each district in Punjab is headed by a Deputy Commissioner (DC). The DC is responsible for the overall administration of the district, including land revenue matters. They play a crucial role in revenue collection, dispute resolution, and maintaining law and order related to land issues⁴.
- **Tehsildars:-** Tehsildars are revenue officers responsible for sub-district administrative units known as Tehsils. They oversee revenue collection, land records maintenance, dispute resolution, and administration at the Tehsil level⁵.
- **Naib Tehsildars:-** Naib Tehsildars are assistant revenue officers who assist Tehsildars in their duties. They are responsible for supervising Kanungos and Patwaris and play a role in revenue administration and dispute resolution.
- **Kanungos:-** Kanungos supervise Patwaris within a particular circle or group of villages. They ensure the accuracy of land records, conduct surveys, and assist in revenue collection.

² <http://plrs.org.in>. (accessed on 15 Jan 2022)

³ Punjab Land Record Society, *Fard Kendra Operational Manual- 2016*, VER-1.0

⁴ <https://revenue.punjab.gov.in> (assessed on 16-01-2024)

⁵ Punjab Land Record Society, *Fard Kendra Operational Manual- 2016*, VER-1.0

- **Patwaris:-** Patwaris are village-level revenue officers who maintain land records, record changes in land ownership, and assist in revenue collection⁶.
- **The Director Of Land Records:-** To aid deputy commissioners and commissioners in the maintenance of records of rights and revenue registers, and to advise the Financial commissioners and Government on these matters and on measures for the promotion of agricultural efficiency, an officer known as the director of land Records, is appointed. He has no administrative functions; his business is to inspect, advice, record or lesson the powers and responsibilities belonging to Deputy commissioners and commissioners and to the financial commissioners in connection with every batch of revenue administration.
- **Duties of Director of land Records:-** Among the principle duties of the director of land Records are- the supervision of the patwari and kanungo and the inspection of the records of rights and statistical records compiled through its means, the posting of settlement kanungos and maps. His duties with regard to settlements, the control of the income and expenditure of mutation fees and of all expenditure on contingencies connected with the kanungo and patwari establishment and with the revenue records; crop, price and weather reports, return of wages and of agricultural statistics, crop experiments by district officers and cattle census; rain-gauges in the area.

The director of land records brings to the notice of the deputy commissioner or commissioner any failure to carry out properly the provisions regarding these matters contained on the land revenue Act and rules or in administrative instructions issued by the Financial Commissioners. On points of detail his recommendations usually be accepted as those of an expert charged with duties of a technical character. But all doubtful and important questions referred by the director for the orders of the Financial Commissioner. when a districts under settlement, or when special measures adopting taken for the bringing of maps and records up to date as preliminary to re-assessment, the Director will make this reports to the Financial commissioner. He must not himself issue instructions to the officer on charge. Any orders which the Financial Commissioner may issue will be sent through the Commissioner⁷.

Fard Kendras as an Initiative of E-Governance by Punjab Government:-

Punjab Land Records Society was created by Department of Revenue with the plan of computerizing land records and to make them accessible to the general public. 163 Fard Kendras have been set up by the society. These Kendras have been set up with the public private partnership (PPP). It will facilitate public to collect their documents across the counter with smallest amount of fee. At present people can get copy of FARD (nakal) on the same counter through paying minimum fee⁸.

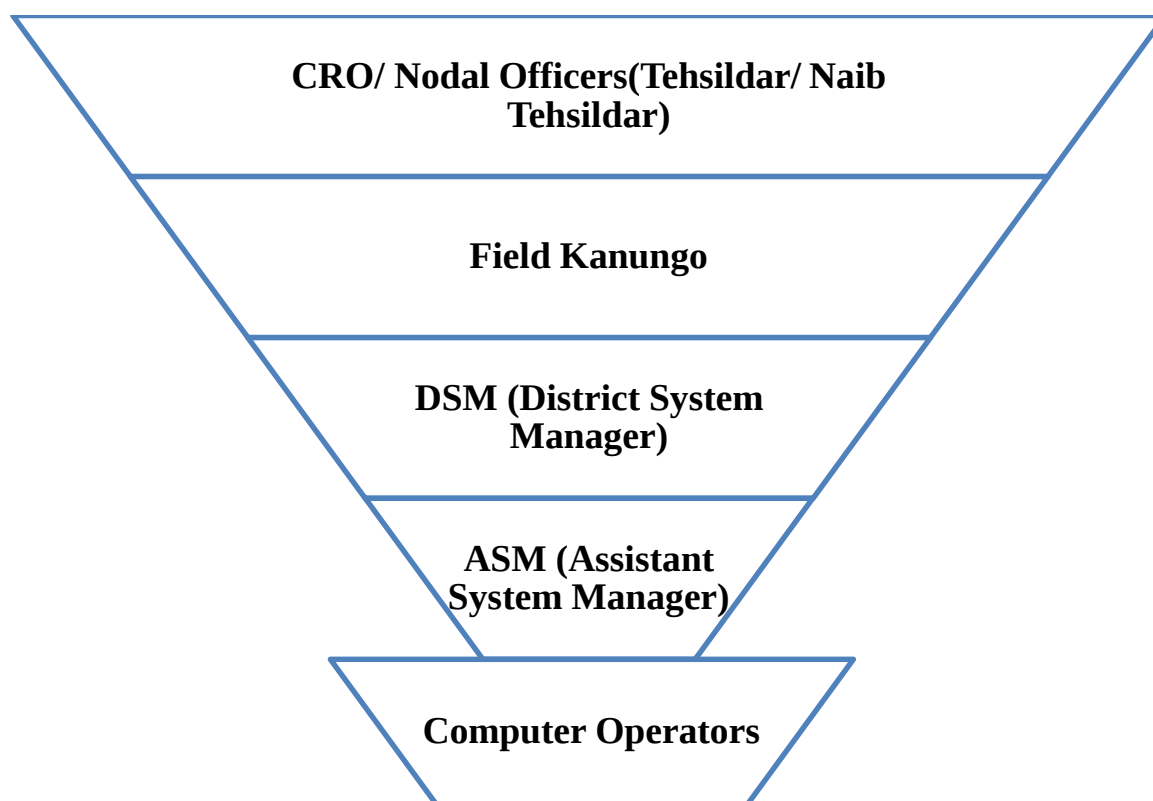
Organisational Structure of Fard Kendra:-

- CROs/ Nodal Officer (Tehsildar / Naib Tehsildar)
- Field Kanungo
- DSM (District System Manager)
- ASM (Assistant System Manger)
- Computer Operators.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://revenue.punjab.gov.in> (assessed on 11-03-2024)

⁸ <http://pls.org.in>. (accessed on 15 Jan 2021)



Functions and Roles of the Revenue Officer in Fard Kendras:-

- CRO/ Nodal Officers:-** For the effective working of Fard Kendra, Tehsildar in case of Fard Kendra at Tehsil level and Naib Tehsildar in case of Fard Kendra at Sub-Tehsil level will be the Nodal Officer. They will confirm that data entry of preparations of Mutations in the system is entered frequently after the authorization of Mutations. He will arbitrary examine the Fard Kendra. The applicants who are present are also talked by him at Fard Kendra. He hears their complaints and tries to sort out them and on the spot, if possible. He will confirm the timely updating of the record. Then the Roster/Schedule are circulated to the Patwari by him. He confirms that Patwari must follow the schedule. For modernizing of record as per Schedule and to make Jamabandi, he will confirm accessibility of Patwari to the Fard Kendra.
- Roles of Field Kanungo:-** The concerned Kanungo shall confirm the records in the computer. He is accountable for the entries to be done in time from Patwari. A "Kanungo," also known as a "Kanungoe," is a term that has been historically used in India to refer to a revenue officer responsible for various administrative and revenue-related duties in rural areas. The specific duties and responsibilities of a Kanungo can vary depending on the region and time period, as the role has evolved over time. However, here are some of the prior duties that a Kanungo is responsible for Land Revenue Collection and Assessment. Below the table briefs us about the role of Field Kanungo in maintaining records of land ownership, use of land, and revenue payments.

1.	Land Records Maintenance	Kanungos were responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date land records. This included recording changes in land ownership, boundaries, and land
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		usage.
2.	Survey and Measurement	Kanungos could be involved in conducting surveys of land, measuring plots, and updating the land measurement records. This information was crucial for accurate revenue assessment ⁹ .
3.	Settlement Operations	During land settlement operations, Kanungos might participate in the process of determining landownership, revenue rates, and other related matters.
4.	Record Keeping	Kanungos maintained registers and records related to revenue collection, land transactions, disputes, and other administrative matters.
5.	Settlement of Land Disputes	Kanungos could be involved in resolving land-related disputes among villagers. They might mediate and provide information from land records to help settle disputes.
6.	Census and Population Records	In some cases, Kanungos were also involved in maintaining census and population records for administrative purposes.
7.	Assisting in Local Administration	Kanungos might assist local administrative officials in various matters such as maintaining law and order, organizing local events, and implementing government policies.
8.	Village Development	Depending on the context, Kanungos might play a role in promoting rural development activities, agricultural extension services, and other initiatives aimed at improving the lives of rural communities.
9.	Reporting to Higher Authorities	Kanungos would report to higher-ranking revenue officials about the revenue collection, land use changes, and any issues or disputes that arose in their jurisdiction.

It's important to note that the role of Kanungo has evolved over time, and the specific responsibilities associated with the role can vary based on the region, historical period, and changes in administrative practices. In contemporary times, many of the traditional duties of Kanungos have been absorbed into the broader administrative framework of modern governments.

- **Duty Patwari:-** Duty patwari is a person duly authorized and deputed at Fard Kendra by Collector. However, be the sole responsibility of the Tehsildar and Naib tehsildar to ensure that, the Duty Patwari is available at the Fard Kendra on all working days. The Duty Patwari shall be available at the Fard Kendra from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on all working days. He will attest the

⁹ <http://plrs.org.in>. (accessed on 15 Jan 2022)

Nakals generated by the operator of the vendor from the system and handover the same applicant against proper receipt after getting it verified. After issuing the Nakal shall make an entry in the prescribed register.

- **Role of DSM (District System Manager):-** DSM is responsible for the maintenance of Fard Kendra on district level. For any technical difficulty, ASM shall report to the District System Manager of the district for any administrative issue. He also checks the monthly summary report of Fard Kendra of their district. DSM can check the register maintained by duty Patwari.
- **Role of ASM (Assistant System Manager):-** The ASM shall take daily backup on CD, Data drive or Server Hard Disk. ASM shall prepare two copies of **fortnightly** full backup. One copy shall be referred to concerned DSM and the other to Head Quarter Jalandhar. The transaction log backup shall be referred to Data Centre, Chandigarh according to the agenda¹⁰. ASM will also act as the custodian of the server room. He will be answerable for the correct reservation and maintenance of Fard Kendra. Along with these common responsibilities, the ASM shall also be accountable for the following:
 1. **Answerable:-** He shall be answerable for the opening and closing procedure of Fard Kendra. The **router** and the Tehsil Server are the assets of PLRS and ASM is answerable for the physical safety and upkeep of the furniture and hardware and equipment fixed at the Fard Kendra.
 2. **Accountable:-** He shall be accountable for executing the service level agreement between the vendor and the PLRS.
 3. **In-Charge:-** The overall in-charge in of Fard Kendra is ASM in all spheres comprising the effective organization, safety and upkeep and complete administration.
 4. **Reporting:-** He shall report to the DSM of the district for any technical difficulty and to the Nodal Officer for any administration matters.
 5. **Registration:-** He will examine the fee register prepared by the operation in routine. He will also be accountable for the upkeep of the registers mentioned below:
 1. Visitor Book.
 2. Attendance Register to be put up daily to the Nodal Officer.
 3. Any other register approved from time to time¹¹.
- **Role and Responsibilities of the Operator:-**
 1. For supply of computerized nakal, the operator will fill the essential details in the system, which is provided verbally by the applicant to him.
 2. He will get the compulsory revenue record from the data base and check the number of pages and charges to be funded by the applicant.
 3. He will offer the Nakal on printed stationery. After signing it and putting a stamp of Fard Kendra on the Nakal, he will provide it to the applicant after receiving charge from the applicant.
 4. He will print the particulars of Nakal distributed by him and handover it to the ASM along with govt. Record fee at the end of the day.
 5. He will also accept applications or any other documents for commencement of mutations of inheritance etc. from the applicant. He also issue receipt to the applicant. Through the CRO, he

¹⁰ Punjab Land Records Society, Fard Kendra Operational Manual- 2009, VER 1.0.

¹¹ <http://plrs.org.in>. (accessed on 15 Jan 2022)

will he will refer it to the Halqa Patwari after making an entry of the application in the receipt register.

- **Role of Patwari:**-Patwari also known as a "Lekhpal" or "Talati," is a term used in India and some other South Asian countries to refer to a village accountant or revenue officer responsible for various administrative and revenue-related tasks at the local level. The role of a Patwari can vary based on the region and administrative practices, but here are some common duties associated with the position:

1.	Land Record Maintenance	One of the primary responsibilities of a Patwari is to maintain accurate and up-to-date land records. This includes recording details about land ownership, land use, boundaries, and any changes in land transactions.
2.	Land Measurement and Surveys	Patwaris often conduct surveys of land and measure plots to update land measurement records. They ensure that the records reflect the accurate dimensions and boundaries of land parcels.
3.	Collection of Land Revenue	Patwaris are responsible for collecting land revenue from farmers and landowners based on the assessed rates. They maintain records of revenue payments and ensure that they are collected in a timely manner.
4.	Record of Cultivation and Crops	Patwaris keep track of the crops being cultivated on different parcels of land. This information is used to determine the agricultural productivity and revenue potential of each plot.
5.	Mutation of Land Records	When there are changes in land ownership due to transactions like sale, inheritance, or partition, Patwaris update the land records to reflect these changes. This process is known as "mutation" ¹² .
6.	Settlement Operations	During land settlement operations, Patwaris assist in determining landownership, revenue rates, and resolving disputes related to land.
7.	Issuing Land Documents	Patwaris issue various land-related documents such as land ownership certificates, record-of-rights documents, and land maps to landowners and interested parties.
8.	Village Administration Support	Patwaris may provide administrative support to local officials by assisting in maintaining law and order, conducting census surveys, and implementing government programs at the village level.
9.	Land Dispute Resolution	Patwaris often act as mediators in resolving land-related disputes among villagers. They provide information from land records to help settle disputes

¹² Punjab Land Records Society, Fard Kendra Operational Manual- 2009, VER 1.0.

		and maintain peace in the community.
10.	Updating Records	Patwaris ensure that all changes, transactions, and events related to land are accurately recorded in the land registers and documents.
11.	Population Census	In some cases, Patwaris participate in population census activities, contributing to the compilation of accurate population data.
12.	Maintaining Village Maps	Patwaris may maintain maps of the village that show land parcels, boundaries, and other geographical features.

It's important to note that the role and responsibilities of a Patwari can vary widely based on the region, administrative structure, and technological advancements. In modern times, some of the traditional duties of Patwaris have been integrated into digital platforms and more advanced land management systems¹³.

Inspection of Fard Kendra:-

To ensure effective service delivery and convenience for visitors, inspections of Fard Kendras are conducted by the Tehsildar, Naib-Tehsildar, District System Manager, and other officials from the Head Office of PLRS.

- Sitting arrangement for visitors and availability of fresh and clean drinking water.
- Facilities of smell free toilet, for male and female visitors in Fard Kendra.

Moreover, the examining officers, as a regulatory measure, must also confirm that each and every paisa collected for handing out Fards is deposited in bank timely in required head of account. The District System Manager and Tehsildar or Sub Tehsildar must examine the Fard Kendra to confirm that above mentioned services are given and also the Government fee is correctly accounted. If any defect is found regarding preceding actions, then Deputy Commissioner and Director Land Records Punjab cum Member Secretary, PLRS concerned must be informed timely. Officials from Head Office of PLRS can also examine the Fard Kendras as per given schedule:

1.	District System Manager	Once in a month
2.	Nodal Officer (CRO)	Shall randomly check Fard Kendra
3.	Chief Administrator (SDM)	C.A. shall also carry out random checking
4.	Officials from Headquarter	When directed by the Member Secretary

Key aspects of the transition to online land revenue work in Punjab might include:-

- **Digitization of Land Records:-** Converting paper-based land records into digital formats to ensure easy accessibility, accuracy, and transparency.
- **Online Land Records Portal:-** Creating online portals where landowners, tenants, and interested parties can access land-related information, records, and documents.

¹³ Ibid.

- **Online Application Processes:-** Introducing digital platforms for submitting applications related to land revenue matters, such as mutation requests, revenue payment, and land transfer.
- **Digital Payments:-** Enabling online payment of land revenue and related fees through digital payment systems.
- **e-Governance Initiatives:-** Implementing e-governance initiatives to facilitate faster and more efficient delivery of land revenue services.
- **Geographical Information Systems (GIS):-** Utilizing GIS technology to map and manage land parcels, aiding in accurate land assessment and dispute resolution.
- **Online Grievance Redressal:-** Providing a platform for citizens to register and track grievances related to land revenue matters.
- **Training and Capacity Building:-** Providing training to revenue officials and stakeholders to effectively use digital tools and platforms¹⁴.

Conclusion:-

The hierarchical organization of Land Revenue Administration in Punjab plays an important role in maintaining transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in land Management System. From the top, Financial Commissioner to Patwari at grassroots level, every official of Land Revenue administration plays distinct yet unified duties that make sure proper record maintenance, collection of revenue, and dispute resolution. Despite the challenges of outdated practices and governmental delays, transformations such as digitization through the initiatives like fard Kendras have make stronger and fast to the system. In general the structured organization with hierarchy continues to be the strength of effective Land Revenue Administration in Punjab.

On the other hand, Punjab Land Records Society is a society recognized (under Registration of Societies Act, 1860) by the Government of Punjab to prepare strategies, policies, procedure and to assist the State Government and Government of India in the effort to provide well-organized and prompt services in the public matters, relating to land and revenue, through the use of Information Technology and its related fields. The main objective of the Punjab Land Records Society (PLRS) is to supervise, monitor the execution of computerization and digitization of Land Records and related documents in Punjab for the overall benefit of the society and to make available Land Records related services through various common access infrastructures like Sukhmani Centres to the public. This Society is a State level body being constituted in particular to deal with the Land Records in all its dimensions and would work under the overall policy agenda of Punjab State E- Governance Society (PSEGS). The land revenue administration in Punjab, India, was structured to efficiently manage land-related matters, revenue collection, land records maintenance, and dispute resolution. The organizational structure can vary over time due to administrative changes and reforms. Here's a general overview of the organizational structure of land revenue administration in Punjab:

¹⁴ <https://revenue.punjab.gov.in/?q=punjab-land-administration-manual-chapter-i-introductory>.