

Rural Councils in Punjab: A Historical Perspective

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It is believed that local government, a valuable support for the entire democratic process, is damaging to local government and a wound to our tradition of free society. Local government, if it is to be real, implies local differences. Nevertheless, they relate to local opinion that is not always uniform. Moves towards variation should be respected and not always suppressed.¹ In case of Pakistan the ancient local government institution has its roots in the Aryan period. The foundations of administrative machinery under the Hindu and Muslim kings like Ashok and Akbar took some steps to modernize this institution although this process of modernization was limited to their imperial interests. The political managers of Pakistan, inheritors of the British administrative set-up, adopted it as an important political institution of the government. However, it has witnessed many ups and downs since then.

The present system of local government in Pakistan is based on the Local Government Act 1979. This Act, enacted in an atmosphere of some optimism, expects better future for Pakistan. It was thought that local authorities would make some genuine contributions in an effort to improve the quality of life for all citizens. Now the outlook has entirely changed and the government has started to replace it with new one. However, the system of

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1. R. Stoker and G. Stoker, *Local Government in Europe*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991),

