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**Societal constraints of Biraderi Politics in Process of Democratization A case  
Study of District Toba Tek Singh**

**Abstract**

*The historical, political junctures of colonial and post-colonial Punjab discloses that in the milieu of Punjab, the study of biraderi politics has probable new significance as it provides a rational model of manipulation of power through biraderies. It postulates a state where biraderism is used by biraderies as a tool of manipulation through social, abstract power by which to strive for control over scarce resources and the remains of colonial rule. In Punjab's political history this politico-sociological aspect has received little attention. Biraderi politics, if ever studied, are only dealt with at a national and elctorl level by stressing the roles of bureaucratic, military elites and parliamentarians that represented by the landed aristocrats. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to analyse through an empirical method that to what extent different following variation of the social dynamics of the biraderi politics create adherence in Punjab and thus influence the process of democratization with particular reference to District Toba Tek Singh.*

**Key Words:** Social structures, caste, family, culture, status, gender discrimination, process of democratization

**Introduction:**

In the socio-political setup of the Punjab, *biraderi* or caste (*qaum*) is believed to be the strongest adhesive identity force that is often selected in forming the groupings and loyalties of people with one another. The social and cultural adherence of the people with their *biraderi* ties has crucial impact due to socioeconomic and political dynamics of *biraderi* politics in the national and particularly in local level politics. The dynamics of *biraderi* politics are a persistent phenomenon of Punjab political dispensation. Here in this study the focus is given to the social-cultural dynamics of biraderies. In the light of the observations of this study, the role of Toba Tek Singh deserves scholarly attention as so far no such study has been conducted. The present work in this context is a district level study in which

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politics of kinship or *biraderi* system is to be studied as manoeuvring factor that seized the emancipation powers of individuals and does not let them participate in the democratization process on the behalf of their free will and it further along within the representative democratization process only represents the upper strata of the *biraderies*. Local politics in this as in many other Punjab districts cannot be fully understood without reference to the role of the *biraderi* system. *Biraderies* have emerged as a compelling force which is used to manipulate political power and authority.

The ethnic diversities are the specific attributes and societal relationships of individuals “that are entrenched, which provide the people with a defined identity that is persuaded or transmitted over time from generation to generation.”<sup>1</sup> Patrick O’ Neil termed this practice “Ascription”-----the assigning of a particular quality at birth”.<sup>2</sup> People do not select these kind of identities rather they are innate attributes that are largely fixed in the entire life of an individual. These socio-ethnic compositions have variation in the national mould of any state. Its variegated ethnic groups are more identifiable in the “*Biraderies*” which is based on caste, clan, lineage, and family in sub-continent.

**Literature review** Melody of *biraderi*-based politics and use of its ensemble for political drives is a game coined by the colonial rule as the evidences show in the second chapter of this research. No doubt the phenomenon of caste, creed system is a pre-historic juncture which is embedded in the souls of every individual of this region. Sir, Danzil Ibbotson precisely elaborated the social importance of the *biraderies* and castes of this region. It is important here to mention that the *biraderi* system in Muslim perspective is differed from that of Hinduism in India. Basically, it is a linkage that developed through offspring’s of ancestry belonging to the same caste and the collection of castes, constitutes that *biraderi*.<sup>3</sup> “Patrilineal descent lies at the heart of *Biraderi* as a social institution, although its boundaries vary with marriage connections, bonds of reciprocal obligation and political structure.”<sup>4</sup> *Biraderi* is the strongest factor of unity among proprietorship and used by the landed elite *Biraderies* for political mobilization that is evident through its, political and economic and specifically in **Social** dynamics. V.D Mahjan cited Sir Henry Maine that “Clans are expanding families tracing their descent to the eldest male member of the original family.”<sup>5</sup>

According to the ethnographers like J.C. Mansfield and William Crock cogitated that castes were defined with specific professions of the members of the concerned castes. But Riseley negates this perception and said that is a natural phenomenon of Indian people and it is imprinted on the bodies of the people like a racial fact which couldn’t be apart.<sup>6</sup>

According to Gilmartin, for the British rulers, *biraderi* was a social abstract that was stated generally to any kind of relationship, derived as a native association, which is local and well-defined than religion.<sup>7</sup> Here in Punjab and specifically in District Toba Tek Singh the *Biraderi* ties are very strong which regulating socio-political and economic sphere of society and destabilize the road map of the democratic process. Oscar Lewis writes that in academia behind the democratic

system the hypothesis on voting is that the individual is a self-determining, by having a capable thinking and set to take his own choice. But, in a kinship structured society..... it is the large extended family, which is the basic component of most decision making. So the preeminent is that voting becomes an extended family process.<sup>8</sup> This argument was commonly perceived stating to the important role that *biraderi* played in the political process of the Punjab, especially in elections.

L.C. Tupper<sup>9</sup> and Sir. Denzil Ibbotson writes on the whole social fabric is interwoven by caste and creed system.<sup>10</sup> He debates in very detail and explicit on the matter of caste system along with its relation to the economy as he says that “*occupation is the primary basis caste \_\_\_\_\_ The whole diversity of caste is the diversity of occupation*”.<sup>11</sup> The rise and fall in the social status are determined by the occupations.

Nicholas B. Dirks also supported Ibbotson’s argument that this is the phenomenon of Brahmins to secure their statuesque. He claims that as the matter of fact, caste is not an impermeable diligence of prehistoric India and also not a sole system that replicates a core cultural value.. Dirks does not argue that caste was dreamt up by the British. But under British domination caste did become a single term adept for identification and above all integrating India’s diversified forms of social identity and organization.”<sup>12</sup> Shandana Khan and Haris Gazdar also report in their joint venture that, “In three districts of Punjab, that is Chakwal, Toba Tek Singh and Muzaffar Garh, community is strongly based on *biraderi system*.”<sup>13</sup> Ahmad Mughees and Fouzia Naseem in their joint effort, describe that “Casteism and *Biraderism* are the main components of the culture of Sub-Continent that had a deep impact on the political alignment of the people.”<sup>14</sup> This study concludes that culture has deep-rooted effects on the political system process. The *biraderi* politics are leading feature of Indian and Pakistani political process.<sup>15</sup> While comparing the Pakistan and Indian social system they point out that “*biraderism*” in Pakistan is a political phenomenon as it was promoted by the non-Party electoral process and by non-democratic forces and in India, these features are not seen even though the social system impacts on the political system. So the caste and creed system is the main hurdle in Punjab’s social setting that encircled the process of evolutionary change for centuries. According to those perceptions, it was supposed that races of Punjab are similar to primordial Europe in civilization perspective and was backward in knowledge, thus the social and evolutionary change is possible under the European form of government.

### **Research Methodology:**

This study is an empirical and descriptive analysis. In order to this the phenomenon under the study, ‘Survey Research tool’ is selected for empirical research. To conduct this study the objective is to document and assess through a survey, to what extent the social dynamics, i.e. Social structure, *biraderi* / family, culture, occupation, religion, education, status, titles, gender discrimination; of *biraderi* politics is considered to be an impediment in the process of democratization or is it subsidized this process of Toba Tek Singh. The Rational Choice Theory is used in this empirical study and the data was entered into the

(SPSS), version 16.0. This software was also useful to get Percentage Based Data Analysis of the collected data.

Data Collection: As the study is about the whole population of the Pakistan to conduct it is beyond the limits to do. A reliable sample of 220 respondents is chosen from the registered voters who are the political participants. The reporting sample units the respondents are selected on stratified random along with convenient basis.

A structured survey questionnaire the SDBPQ<sup>16</sup> has been carved out.<sup>17</sup> It was made by the questionnaire guide on a Likert type scale. The questionnaire technique is used to collect first-hand data which made the research innovative and original. *Biraderi Politics Questionnaire* *Biraderi Politics Questionnaire* is a 20 item scale. To check the validity of the questionnaire Alpha reliability test is run that shows in the below table that it is a highly valid and reliable as  $\alpha$  is 0.78 that is quite near to reliability requirement the 0.80.

**$\alpha$  Reliability of the Data;**

Scale	K	$\alpha$	M (SD)
Social Dynamics of BPQ	20	.78	77.42 (7.3)

Following are the inferential statistics of the data;

**T- TEST for Gender Differences in social dynamics**

Results show that there is no significant difference in the male, female opinion regarding Social Dynamics of *Biraderi Politics*, as the thinking of the both are same. It is pertinent to mention here as male is domineering in the *biraderi* discourse so the thinking of the male is reflected in the female opinion. Females fully endorse what the males think regarding the social dynamics of *biraderi* politics. Both genders fully agreed that in District Toba Tek Singh *biraderi* politics is dominated and covering the aspect of social dynamics of the democratization process. Patriarchy is significantly overwhelming rule in the social set up of Toba Tek Singh.

**Table No.1**

**T- TEST Showing Gender Differences in the social dynamics of BPQ Functioning (N= 220)**

	Male (n=112)	Female (n=108)	T	P
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Social Dynamics of <i>Biraderi Politics</i>	78.12 (6.9)	76.69 (7.8)	-.25	.80

Note. P = n. s

### One Way ANOVA for Caste

Results indicate that caste reported brings no significant variance in the thinking about the biraderi politics among the different castes. The intensity of the phenomenon is evident from the table below that thinking of all castes is the same and they all believe that social institution biraderi is covering the all facets of the individual the social constraints.

**Table No. 2**                      **One Way ANOVA for Caste (N=220)**

	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Social Dynamics of <i>Biraderi</i> Politics	11921.527	54.927	.67	.67

Note.  $df = 6, 214, p = n.s$

### One Way Anova for Rural Urban Areas

Results specify that the rural-urban reported that there is a significant difference regarding the social dynamics of biraderi politics with the mean scores of rural is ( $M=13.23, SD= 3.9$ ) as compared to Urban ( $M=13.0, SD= 4.1$ ). It depicts that in the perspective of social dynamics that these are more intensified in rural areas rather than in urban areas. (see table below)

**Table. No. 3**                      **One Way Anova for Rural Urban Areas (N=220)**

	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Social Dynamics of <i>Biraderi</i> Politics	11921.527	52.60	4.87**	.01

Note.  $df= 1, 219, p<.05$

### One Way Anova for Education

Results specify that education reported Analysis of variance that there is no any significant difference regarding *Social Dynamics of biraderi politics*. The strength of the phenomenon is evident from the table No.8 that thinking of the people is the same regarding social dynamics of *biraderi* politics. Illiterate to higher degree holder cannot think that there is any other thing apart from that *biraderism* that may supersede in societal constraints of *biraderi* politics.

**Table No.4**    **One Way Anova for Education (N=220)**

	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Social dynamics of Biraderi Politics	11921.527	54.40	1.05	.37

Note. df = 3, 216,  $p = n.s$

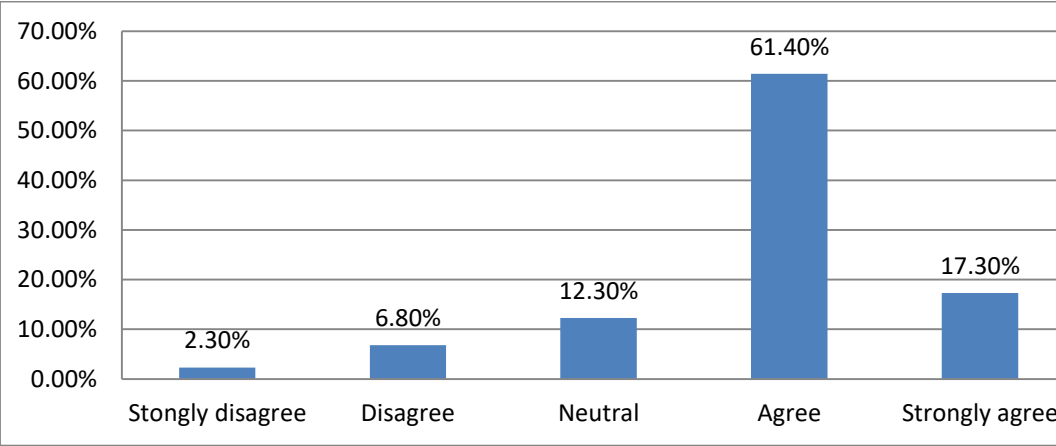
The next analysis of the survey is the Percentage Basis Data Analysis results are given as below:

**Percentage Basis Data Analysis of the Findings**

It is pertinent to mention here that before collecting the data a pilot study is also held to get more reliable data.

**1. Caste, creed and biraderi system is a basic element of the society.**

Figure No. 1



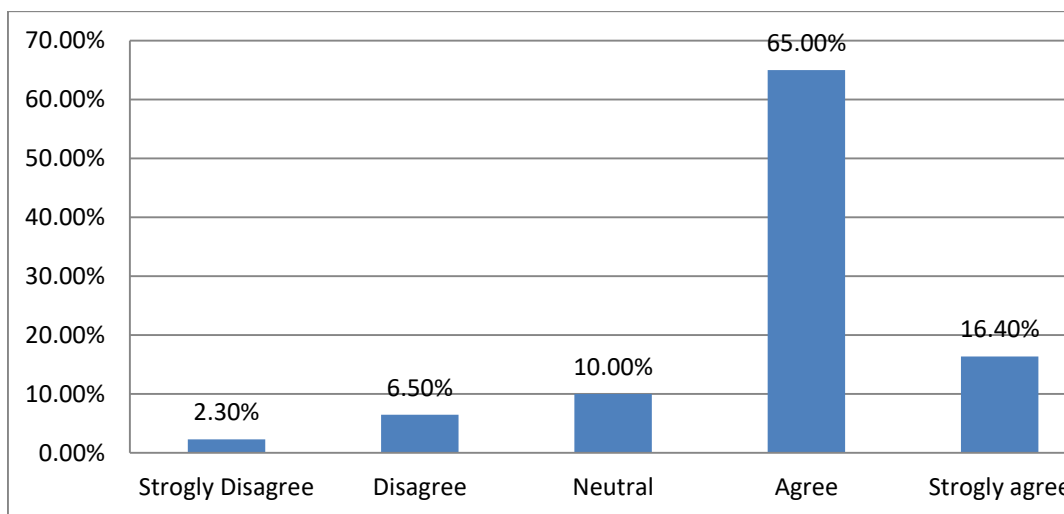
The graph depicts that around 78% responses fall in the favour of the statement that social set-up is constructed on the bases of caste, creed and biraderi discriminations as it is an innate recognition, which the members of the society acquired by their birth. Basically biraderi in District Toba Tek Singh is an identifying sign/mark which is predominantly rule over the lives of the members of the society. They are bound to follow its discourse in all walks of life.

**2. Orientation of Biraderi system plays a guardian role in individual's life.**

According to the above results of the statement approximately 80% responses fall in strongly agree and agree option altogether that in the social system the roots of biraderism are defused thus one cannot ever think to go away from the resilient features of biraderism. Because it gives the individual a sense of security in society that is why the biraderi is playing a guardian role.

### **3. The social status of an individual is determined by his/her Biraderi identification to which he/she belongs.**

**Figure No.3**



The figure depicts that around 81% respondents choose agree and strongly agree option of the statement that biraderism is very strongly induces in an individual's life as it is playing a guardian role which provides shelter to its members, that care and protects them. This statement has a strong relationship with the previous statement that social system is erected on this ethnic identity the biraderi dialect. The biraderi system has oriented individual's life by performing his / her defender and custodian duties. From birth to death the biraderi system dictates individual how to lead his/ her life. So there is very little margin for the members of biraderi to think beyond the customs, traditions and norms of biraderi alignment.

### **4. Family lineage creates a sense of prejudice among the individuals about higher biraderies.**

As evident from the figure almost 81% of the respondents favour the statement by selecting the agree and strongly agree options. Thus the social status of the individuals that how they are determined in a society either the name of biraderi is setting their statuses? So the The honour, respect and nobility or disrespect that a person gains in society, is on the basis of his belonging to his/her respective biraderi recognition in society.

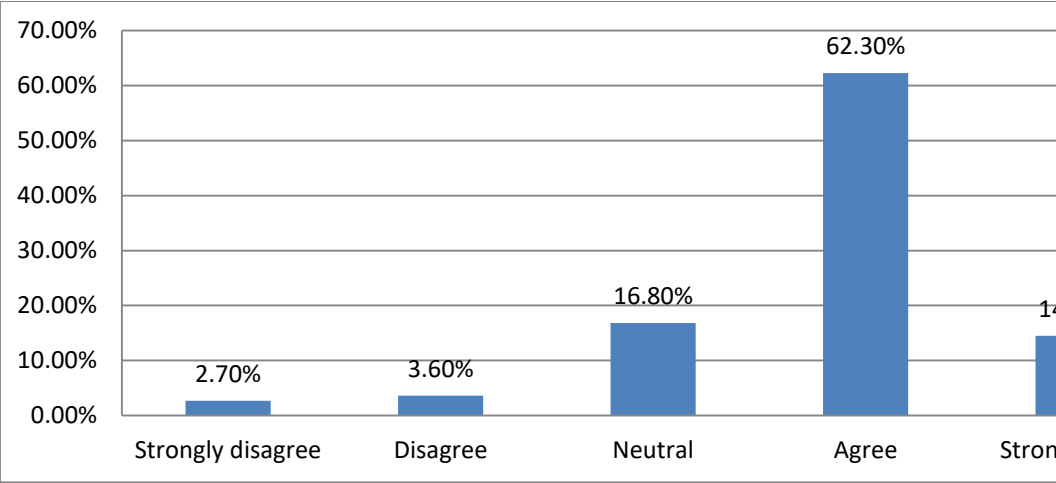
### **5. Major biraderies are dominating due to their higher status in the society.**

The 5<sup>th</sup> statement depicts that higher and lower strata of society are recognised by their biraderi identification. The society has divided the biraderies into ranks for example "Martial races" are considered the higher biraderies menial biraderies are called from their occupations. Actually the strong feeling of belonging to the biraderies creates rifts and discriminations among society. Higher ranked

biraderies dishonour the lower menial biraderies and consider them inferior. The affiliation of higher biraderi creates a sense of prejudice and honour. In this respect the social set up is based on discriminations, inequalities.

**6. “Biraderies are recognized by their occupations.”**

Figure No. 6



There is a very low percentage of those who do not go with this opinion, whereas more than 76% respondents choose agree and strongly agree options for the statement that people do recognise the biraderi identification by their professions to which they are belonging to. The biraderi identification and occupation has correlation. Ibbotson in his classical work discusses both in detail. This situation still prevails that in society biraderies are identified by their occupations.<sup>18</sup> That obviously leads towards fragmentation. That kind of recognition develops a class structure in societal setup. The recognition on occupations definitely grabs their preferences, free will, liberating powers from lower strata of society.

**7. Biraderi system carves out the social structure of society?**

The result shows that biraderi system has constructed the social system. The opinion of the respondents that is, the higher of the agreed option of this argument as they do believe that the construction of societal avenue is on biraderi system that does not let its members liberate in decision making. It means that the whole edifice of societal setup is erected on biraderi treatise. Actually the biraderi system rules over society. This situation denotes that this system of biraderies restricts individualism and do not empower him and give him emancipation power to decide his preferences.

**8. Biraderi system has created discriminations among biraderies in society.**

Overall result shows that respondents are agreed that biraderism has created a rift among the biraderies of the social setup and obstruct the cohesiveness and



assimilation values to prone in a society that is striving for democratisation. Actually, this cohesiveness within biraderies does not let them free and makes them to assimilate other biraderies. That definitely segregates the society and escorts it towards power politics that is a threat to the democratic system.

#### **9. Male has a domineering position in the biraderies.**

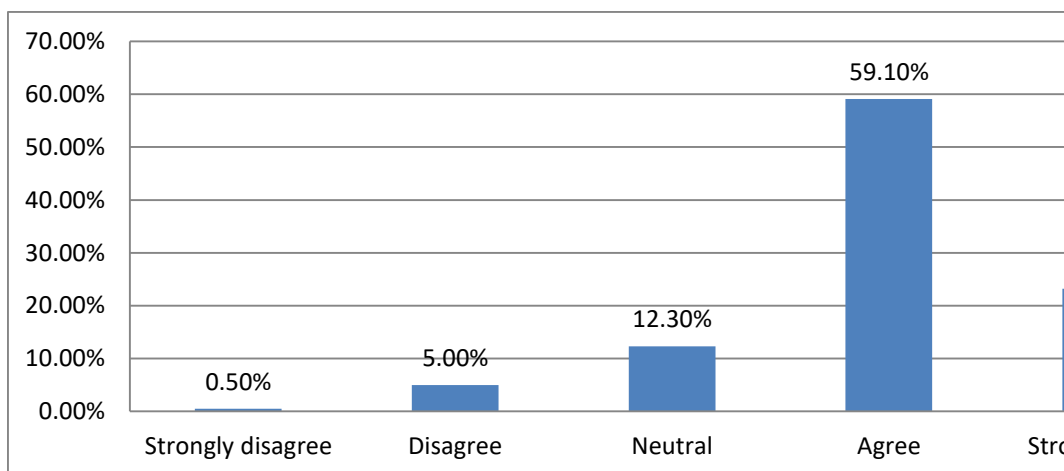
The figure above shows that about 76 % contenders are opted both agree and strongly agree option that Biraderi system has made the males powerful in biraderi politics. Patriarchy rules in eastern societies and the same is in the case of district Toba Tek Singh, that's why the result of "ANOVA test of Gender" depict in this article earlier also shows no significance difference in the thinking of both genders. This is meant that the thinking of females is hampered the same as the thinking of the males. In the Punjabi society, female consists of 52 %, but they are subjugated by their male partners or guardians who are enjoying a free and powerful status in biraderies. The domineering of male in whole social set up subjugates the free will of the female population. The authoritarian role of males dictates females and snubs them to take their own decisions. The whole political system is representing a minority. In comparative urbanised cities like Lahore this male chauvinism deteriorates. But by having an agricultural and rural background the phenomenon still rules over society of the district Toba Tek Singh.

#### **10. Landed biraderies are powerful in society.**

It is pertinent to explain here that only landed biraderies become powerful and hence does not give any space to lower or small biraderies rather dictate them according to their own interests. Overall responses are in favour of the statement that land owning biraderies are strong in social set up. Land played a manoeuvring role since the colonial period till now in empowering the biraderies.

#### **11. Religiously sacred Biraderies (Pir, Sajjada Nashien, etc.) are very domineering in society.**

Figure No. 11

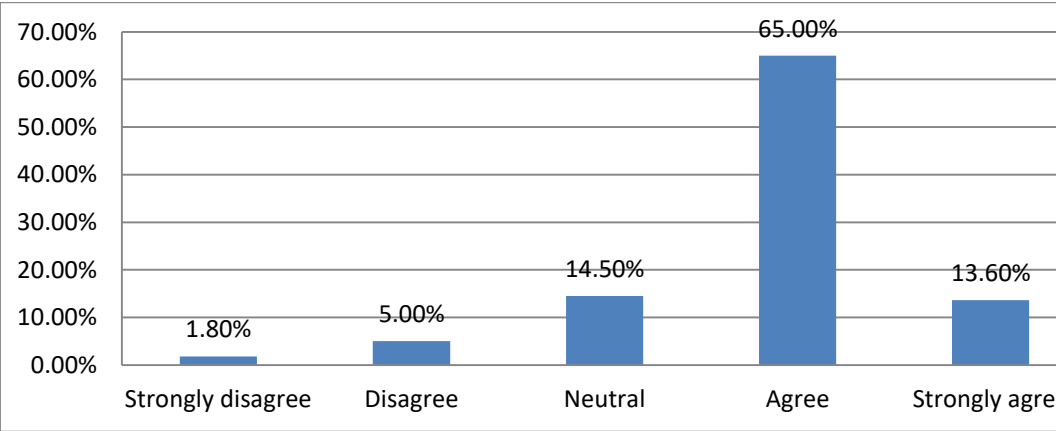


Religion is a very strong factor that may exert its influence upon its followers and hence it has also the power of inspiration to govern over its devotees. The British knew this fact very well, that’s why they sponsored these religious figures of society to gain its vested interest and that dynamic is still prevailing in the society.

There is another aspect that people do want those who are renowned and have a religious background to lead as they trust them. Pragmatically the conspicuous aspect of the Islam in this region has the significant influence, especially Sufism merged with the lives of the villagers. The *Pirs* and *Gadi Nashien* (Successors of the Pirs) also worked and served as mediators of the colonial Raj. They had dual power one was the force of their followers and second was the support of the colonial power. This status is still enjoyed by them. Hamza Alavi rightly called this overdeveloped institution. So these religious based holy biraderies do have dominance on their part and restrict the emancipation powers of individuals as they blindly follow them and respect their words. The respondents riposte in favour of the assumption of the questionnaire.

**12. Lower Biraderies role in society is marginalized by major biraderies’ domination.**

Figure No.12



The high effectiveness of the argument is shown in the table that the efficacy of the role of lower biraderies is very low due to subjugating power of major biraderies. This is a specification of country side the rural areas where the almost everyone knows about others and the head of the village the Chuhderi gives the directions who is at the same time a conflict resolver the chief of ‘Punchayte’, head of the village and revenue collector too. He is the member of renowned biraderi his directions followed. This is also shown from the ANOVA test of rural urban areas that the intensity of the social dynamics is seen more in rural areas as compare to urban areas.

**13. Biraderi system defines the culture of social setup.**

On the whole, the result above in the figure defines that the biraderi system also carves out the cultural norms and customs and obviously these norms and customs are supporting the biraderism in society, thus the self-projected and self-entrenched phenomenon is creeping in the social setup that is shaping the culture. During the colonial Raj the social institution Biraderi played a pivotal role by the British and they discouraged the religion based sectarianism that's why they highlight biraderi alignment.

**14. Biraderi organizations are projecting and promoting biraderies in society.**

Whereas the whole result in this argument describes that about 77% respondents are agreed that biraderi organization is contributing to the phenomenon of biraderism. There are different organisations and associations of different biraderies as described in the previous chapter 4. Actually, these organisations are to build to defend its respective biraderies' interests. These associations of biraderies help in solving the domestic problems.

**15. Biraderism does not allow people to abort themselves from its mesmeric force (the customary laws) in society.**

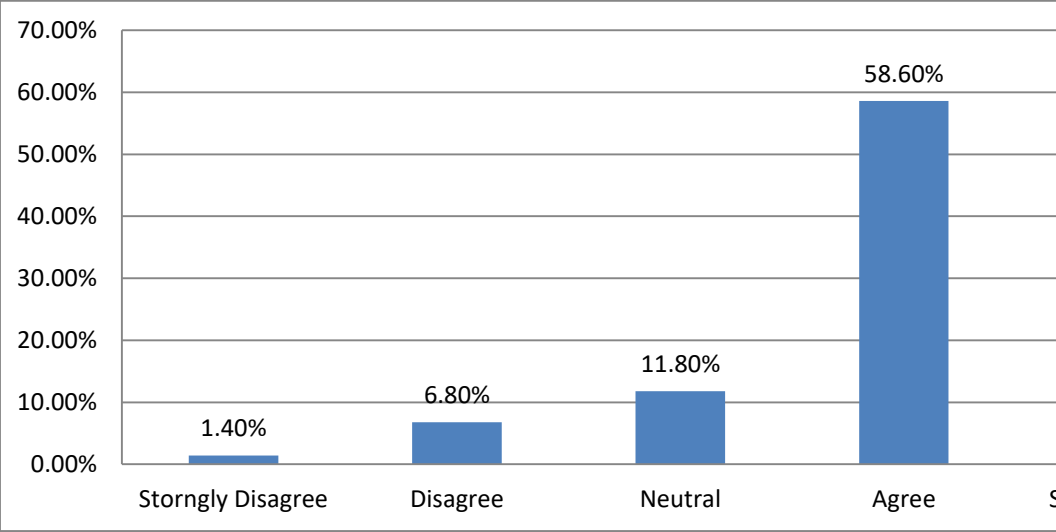
Every biraderi wants to confine to its set of norms because as the previous questionnaire statement, endorsed that biraderi is playing a guardian role that supports its members in economic, social and as well in the political sphere too, so the attraction or the mesmeric force is this requirement that are fulfilled by biraderies weather it is small/ menial biraderi or it is a major prominent biraderi. That is binding and cohesive force which has gravity to pull its members to abide by its norms. The absence of the state's role in providing such basic necessities of its citizens forces them to rely on biraderism. About 75 % respondents agree with this proposition.

**16. Social behaviours of individuals are controlled by Biraderi system.**

The main concern over here to get the consent after getting from previous debate on data set percentage findings either the respondent really believed or not believed that the social attitudes and behaviours are the reflection of the biraderi thesis? The result shows from the figure above that around 77% agree with the proposition. According to the previous findings, it can be inferred that when biraderi is regulating the whole socio-cultural structures and functions, then obviously the social behaviours are also regulated by the biraderi politics and hence the individual is apprehended by the biraderi system.

**17. The dominating role of biraderies creates the dependence of individuals on their respective biraderies as it covers all their problems in the society.**

Figure No.17



The result of the statement shows the more than 80% leaning of the respondents towards the argument that individuals rely on their biraderies to get shelter for the solutions of their personal problems due to dominating role is played by the biraderies as they provide protection and support to the individuals. It is pragmatic that the malfunctioning of the state institutions pushed the individual to rely on their respective biraderies. The economic insecurity is the main hurdle that does not let to break this cohesion force of biraderi system. Not even the economic insecurities, but also socio- political too makes the individual prey of biraderism.

**18. Biraderi system does not allow for bringing change in society.**

The line graph shows the illustration of the responses and it presents a clear picture that respondents have selected about 76% agreed and strongly agreed options that the rigidity of the *biraderi* system does not permit the change to come in social setup. The cohesiveness and the prejudices of biraderism restricted to take any radical step towards liberalism. The primitive system of biraderies does not let the people go against its set norms and values and hence glued them to preserve them generation to generations.

**19. Education is contributing to mild the phenomenon of biraderism in the society.**

The study depicts that the percentiles of the respondent’s views regarding the remedy of biraderism statement that education is playing its role to mild the manifestation of biraderism in social set up. The results are presented that around 87% responders are agree with the option. It is also obvious from the data findings that people do agree that education may contribute in minimising the biraderism but the finding of the ANOVA test of education provides reverse results that people admit, but does not follow the teachings of equality, egalitarian system or norms that education is provided to them.

Hence there is a contradiction in the behaviours of the individuals that most of them agree that education can lessen this cohesion, but in practice the educated individuals do believe biraderism is the force that solve their issues.

## **20. Social behaviours of the biraderies are affecting the democratization process.**

That means that on the whole more than 82 % are endorsing the statement that biraderi system creates inequalities, differences and fissures in the social system that is moving towards polarization rather to move on cohesion, solidarity or assimilations that are the requirements of the democratization.

## **Conclusion**

On the whole, the social indicators of democratization are also hampered by the domineering position in a *biraderi system in Punjab* for example, social inequalities are shown in, norms, values, status, prestige, titles of the biraderies, social structures, culture, gender, and occupations all are regulated through biraderi system and the self-cohesive force of *biraderism* obstructs the powers of the individuals. Those all variables contributing in restricting the use of free will of the individuals. The economic perspective of democratization also hinges up by *biraderi* Politics. It highlights the importance of economic security of the individual, but in rural agrarian set up of Punjab is also embedded by the *biraderi* system. The class structure of the *biraderies* clearly indicates that the upper strata are enjoying the freedom of democratic standards, whereas the lower strata of biraderies are submissive and do not have the fruits of democracy. Economic instability makes them vulnerable to dependent and this dependency has captured their preferences. Land, wealth, and affluence are guarantors of one emancipating power. In this the sub-variables like Wealth, Status, Land, business, artisanship, dependence very much count for the freedom of an individual's free will for rational choice in a democratic process. Undemocratic social behaviours of the people affect this process of democratization in the society. Which diffused and divided in class, creed and *biraderi* system with its traditional stigmatic norms cannot enhance democratic values to adapt as there are social and economic disparities which reversely forces the individuals to rely on the *biraderi* system and does not socialize them to choose their free, fair and rational preferences. Only an educational emergency should be declared and educational reforms should be introduced. So that the social as well as political awareness can be enhanced to breach the social norms and taboos of biraderism and paved the way of democratization.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibbetson Denzil, *Punjab Castes*, (Lahore: Mubarak Ali Publishers, 1916), 1 -27