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CONTENTS

S. No.	Topic	Page No.
1.	AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON AWARENESS, EXISTENCE AND THE NEED OF IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL CODE OF ETHICS IN TOURISM AMONGST THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN THE CITY OF AHMEDABAD Dr. Bhavin Pandya Ms. Jaya Sharma	1
2.	GAMING TECHNOLOGIES FOR TODAY'S CLASSROOM IN COVID-PANDEMIC Dr. Rasna Schrawat	9
3.	ARTICULATING DIFFERENCE : THE COMBATIVE TOPOLOGY OF DALIT WRITINGS IN TAMIL Dr. Amandeep	13
4.	INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS & PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT- A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HARYANA ROADWAYS & RAJASTHAN STATE ROADWAYS TRANSPORT CORPORATION Dr. Ruchika Yadav Dr. R.K Katewa	18
5.	SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON LEADER MEMBER EXCHANGE- A STUDY IN PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS Dr. Sheetal	26
6.	2019 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN HARYANA : EXPLAINING THE VERDICT Dr. Sunil Devi Kharb	31
7.	THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON STUDENTS' WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE Bindu Sharma Kumud Pant	38
8.	COVID-19 PANDEMIC : SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SHARING INFORMATION, SPREADING RUMOURS, AND FAKE NEWS Dr. Jignasu Yagnik Dr. Yamini Chandra	52
9.	A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON ELDERS ABUSES Dr. Vimala Kumari	57
10.	FOOTPRINTS OF COVID 19 ON GLOBAL EDUCATION- THE AFTERMATH Dr. Meena Bhandari Ms Atulya Verma	61
11.	GENDER INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION : A STUDY OF SCHOOL GOING GIRLS OF KEOTI BLOCK OF DARBHANGA DISTRICT IN BIHAR, INDIA. Dr. Manishankar Jha	66
12.	A STUDY OF RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT Dr. Pankaj Tiwari Ms. Shruti Srivastava	74
13.	STRUGGLE OF WOMEN IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S SHALIMAR, THE CLOWN Dr. Rani Tiwari	77
14.	FACTORS AFFECTING INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT WORKPLACE – A LITERATURE REVIEW Devpriya Dey Dr. R Prakash Babu	82
15.	A STUDY OF CYCLONE DISASTER IN INDIA IN THE SPECIAL CONTEXT OF AMPHAN CYCLONE Ajay Kumar Yadav	86

16.	THE EBB AND FLOW OF INDIAN RETAIL SECTOR IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC	Sayantani Banerjee Sreenivasa Rao D Venkata Naga Manjula P	93
17.	THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE ON EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION	Dr. Ruchika Yadav Gurbir Singh Khera CFA	100
18.	A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 IN SOME SELECTED SECTOR	Gourab Das	111
19.	ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AND ACCULTURATION STRATEGY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	Shabana Bano	118
20.	PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS IN INDIA : APPLICATION OF CAMEL APPROACH	Geetaben Amrutlal Goriya Dr. Bhavesh K. Patel	122
21.	DYSPHORIC WHITE ROBES : A SOCIOLEGAL INSIGHT INTO THE LIVES OF VRINDAVAN WIDOWS	Kartik Agre	128
22.	PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTION TO TOTAL INVESTMENT OF LIFE INSURANCE SECTOR IN INDIA	Ms. Prachi Pathani Dr. Seema Baldua	133
23.	COMPETING ON RESOURCES. LESSONS FROM RBV PERSPECTIVE	Shri Niwas Modani Dr. Vibhor Paliwal	141
24.	EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CREATIVITY OF DEPRIVED AND NON-DEPRIVED STUDENTS	Dr. Smita Jaiswal Puneet Kumar	146
25.	E-LEARNING AND IT'S IMPACT ON TEACHING OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE	Dr. Aarti Mahajan	151
26.	TRENDS IN NEW MEDIA LANDSCAPE : EXAMINING THE POPULARITY AND IMPACT OF THE ONLINE GAME PUBG	Arunav Moitra Miss Saloni Gupta	156
27.	DOES THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE STIMULATES THE SHOPPING INTENTION AT BIG BAZAAR IN GANGTOK?	Dr. Ravi Shekhar Vishal Dr. B. Muthu Pandian	160
28.	IMPACT OF MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP ON FORMATION OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND PERSONAL VALUES AMONG ADOLESCENTS	Tejshwee Kumari Dr. Rita Kumar	169
29.	AGARIA TRIBE : THE CHRONICLES OF MEGALITHIC TRADITION OF IRON SMELTERS OF NORTHERN CHHATTISGARH REGION	Dr. Nitesh Kumar Mishra Anshu Mala Tirkey	174
30.	ACCESSING E-GOVERNANCE SERVICES THROUGH SMARTPHONES : CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	Dr. Rahul Gupta Dr. Ajay Singh Dr. Amit K Pandey	178
31.	CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE REAL WORLD	Ms. Monika Gautam	183

32.	A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF DEVELOPMENTAL STORIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DAINIK BHASKAR AND RAJASTHAN PATRIKA	Dr. Abhishika Sharma Amit Verma	188
33.	CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE ON COVID - 19.	Dr. Kinshuk Pathak	195
34.	DESCARTES PROBLEM OF DUALISM : A RESOLUTION IN CHANDOGYA UPNISAD	Chetan Kumar	201
35.	GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE JOB SATISFACTION AMONG FIVE-STAR HOTEL EMPLOYEES : A STUDY OF HYDERABAD, INDIA	Parul Gupta Prof. (Dr.) Aparna Raj	205
36.	PRADHAN MANTRI JAN DHAN YOJANA SCHEME AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION – A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SHORANUR MUNICIPALITY	Dr. Nithin Venugopal Ms. Sarannya. S	214
37.	AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON STAFF TURNOVER : REASONS AND SOLUTIONS	Pranita Srivastava	222
38.	IMPACT OF MID-DAY MEAL PROGRAMME ON THE PHYSICAL HEALTH OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN (6-12 YEAR) IN PATNA TOWN.	Dr. Kumari Rupam	228
39.	A CASE STUDY OF CASTE SYSTEM AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS IN PHULWARI SHARIF BLOCK	Amarjeet Kumar	234
40.	THE PORTRAYAL OF INDIAN CULTURE IN 'THE HUNGRY TIDE' BY AMITAV GHOSH AND 'GLASSBLOWER'S BREATH' BY SUNETRA GUPTA	Sonia Samir Khan	240
41.	THE ROLE OF NANO-BASED ADSORBENT FOR THE REMOVAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL CONTAMINANT FROM WATER/WASTEWATER	Deepika Rathore Swati Goyal	244
42.	NEGOTIATING CONVERSION, ISLAMISATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY : A SOCIO-CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF KAYAMKHANIS OF RAJASTHAN.	Mr. Altaf Hussain	250
43.	INFORMATION NEED ABOUT AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AMONG THE FISHERMEN OF KAKDWIP SUBDIVISION IN SOUTH 24 PGS DISTRICT : A STUDY	Jayita Naskar Dr. Subarna Kumar Das	255
44.	GOOD GOVERNANCE, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND ROLE OF JUDICIARY	Dr. Niraj Kumar Ashish Alok	261
45.	THE ONLY PANACEA FOR SURVIVAL AND GROWTH – “WORK HAPPINESS”: AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS (MPS) OF SAURASTHRA REGION	Dr. Ashish Joshi Dr. Chirag V Vyas	267
46.	ICT ENABLED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR LEARNERS DURING COVID -19 : A CASE STUDY OF IGNOU REGIONAL CENTRE, LUCKNOW	Dr. Kirti Vikram Singh Dr. Anamika Sinha Dr. Manorama Singh	277

**NEGOTIATING CONVERSION, ISLAMISATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY :
A SOCIO-CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
OF KAYAMKHANIS OF RAJASTHAN.** 

ABSTRACT

This paper will give you a brief socio-historical account of the Kayamkhani community of Rajasthan. This paper deals with their origin, conversion, their political and military involvement during medieval times. Further, this paper will also discuss change and continuity of various Islamic and non-Islamic customs and Rajput traditions even after penetration of various Islamic reform movements among them. In this paper I will use both historical and sociological methods to understand their conversion contexts and their socio-cultural outcomes.

Keywords : Kayamkhani, Shekhawati, Conversion, Rajput, Islamisation, culture.

Introduction

The Kayamkhanis are a small Indian Muslim community who flourished in northern Rajasthan from c. 1450 to 1730. (Talbot, 2009, p. 211). The Kayamkhani is a group, which derives its origin from the Hindu Rajput of Chauhan clan who embraced Islam, and their conversion dates from the time of Feroz Shah. Their place of foundation is Shekhawati, and they are scattered all over Rajasthan, but mostly found in Jhunjunu, Sikar and Nagor district. Shekhawati region has been a prominent place of Kayamkhanis, from where they spread to the other parts of the country. Kayamkhani ruled in this region for almost three centuries. In the census report of 1911, their population was 28,340. (Kealy, 1913, p.165). The Kayamkhani are still spread out in various districts, of Rajasthan particularly, in Churu, Sikar, Jhunjunu, Bikaner, Nagore, Jodhpur, tonk, Ganganagar and Bhilwara.

Origin and conversion of Kayamkhani's

The Kayamkhani is a community which derives its origin from the Hindu Rajput of Chauhan clan, who embraced Islam during the 14th century. Jaan Kavi (Nejmat Khan) traced the origin of Kayamkhani from its hero Kayam Khan, who laid the foundation for

Kayamkhani Nawabi rule in Hissar (Kavi, 1996, p. 11). There are various views and descriptions about the conversion of the Kayamkhani community. James Tod and Athar Ali supposed the Kayamkhanis to be Afghan. (Tod, 1920). George Thomas says that Kayamkhani Tatar came along with the Mughals when they first invaded India. He served Mughals well; he was made in-charge of Junjunu or Haryana. However, owing to the operation of the Mughals, he moved to Jaipur and started to live there. The Maharaja of Jaipur gave him Fatahpur, and from onwards his progeny came to be known as Kayamkhanis (Franklin, 1803, p. 157). But Sunita Budhwar rejected these views and claimed that Kayamkhanis are actually of purely indigenous origin. (Budhwar, 1978, pp. 412-425).

A western Rajasthan chronicler Mumhato Nansi who served in various Rajput rulers also provide narrative about the conversion of Kaymakhanis and reported that "Sayyid Nasir was a military governed of the Hisar region who, one day raided the town of Dadreva. In the aftermath, of his attack, two baby boys were found abandoned, one is Chauhan and the other Jat. Then they were offered to Sultan Bahlol Lodhi and later the Chauhan was named Kayam Khan and Jat boy was named as Jainu. The descendants of Kayam Khan, known

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