

**Global Challenges, National Responses, and the Question of English and Liberal
Education in Gujarat**

**Summary
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Globalisation has been impacting and reshaping the Indian society for a while now. Developments in the field of science and technology have altered the way we live our lives, and the resultant changes have integrated different economies, nation-states, and people in unprecedented ways, making them increasingly interdependent. A set of material practices across the globe including the gradual withdrawal of the State from the provision of public services, and expansion of the marketplace add to the complexity of what we understand as globalisation. Higher education (understood in terms of tertiary education), is an important site in such an age of globalisation as the State aspires to become a leader in the knowledge economy. It is precisely from this peculiar location that the issues discussed in my research emerge.

The discourse on higher education in India after 2000 is largely defined by the framework of liberalization, privatization and the knowledge economy, within which it is commonly articulated. It focuses on the colossal failure of the State vis-a-vis the promise of the market in terms of its efficiency as a deliverer of the common good. A gradual withdrawal of State funding of higher education, a renewed political resolve to create globally competitive institutions of higher learning, and the unprecedented role of private providers in the higher education sector are three important factors that have transformed higher education in India. Universities in India have gained additional prominence in the last two decades with a growing conviction that, if India is to be a leader, the society of the future must be built on our technical strength and knowledge resources. These changing political, ideological, and social contexts form the background against which the institutions of higher education and my own research are situated.

The thesis is interested in exploring the impact of global changes on national education policies, especially as they affect the departments of the humanities. A raging debate around

the marginalization of the humanities in public universities across the world are analysed in the light of growing private participation in Indian higher education. I have examined the role and value of liberal education through the humanities departments in India. I use the term liberal education in this thesis to refer to a philosophy of education that aims to achieve the full human potential of an individual by way of liberal inquiry. I consider the discipline of humanities as neatly aligned to the goals of liberal education and often use the two terms synonymously. The study focuses on the changing structure and nature of humanities departments to examine the changing character of the university as well as the idea of education in the present context. The liberal arts education has not only had a long history and tradition but has often been the sole form of education known to us across many parts of the world and continue to be the core of many colleges and university programmes. The changes, however, in the last century have been phenomenal. At one level the developments in communication and medical technology is changing our definitions of what it means to be human, while At many colleges and universities, business, communications, education and engineering programs are much more popular than, say, history or English.

The deepening crisis around humanities with an ever increasing emphasis on application oriented knowledge is another context within which my research is situated. This thesis attempts to trace the trajectory of university education in humanities with specific reference to Gujarat, examining its origins, its attenuated growth, its decline, and its reemergence today. It traces the metamorphosis of English literature departments into Culture Studies or Language and Communication departments in an effort to engage the globalised market place. A renewed debate about the use of liberal education within management studies also adds a new dimension that the thesis studies. It will conclude by articulating a pressing need for humanities education in times of conflict, distrust, and doubt.