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# This Dutch univ has 14 PhDs on Gujarat

Prashant Rupera | TNN

**Vadodara:** Strange as it may sound but a department in University of Amsterdam, Holland has as many as 14 PhDs on Gujarat. This tiny city in Europe, unlike other cities in the US and UK, does not have huge NRG population. Instead, it has Indian diaspora from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Still, Gujarat has remained a fascination for sociologists here.

Professor Mario Rutten, whose friends call him Mayur Patel after 25 years of his work in Charotar region, says his department has more studies on Gujarat than any other state of India. "While our own department has around 14 PhDs, other departments in our university also have couple of Gujarat-specific PhDs," says Rutten, who did PhD on farmers of Central Gujarat after staying in Boriyavi village near Anand.

Rutten, professor of comparative sociology of Asia is also director of Asian Studies in Amsterdam. While well-known anthropologist Yan Breman did studies on 'Halpatis' and dowry system among 'Anavil' Brahmins in South Gujarat in early 1960s, sociologists also submitted PhDs on middle-class popu-



THE PATEL FACTOR

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lation in Vadodara, historical place Kheda, diamond cutters of Surat and closure of textile mills in Ahmedabad, among others.

Rutten, who has written number of books on Gujarat, Asia and Europe, has in fact studied social links between Patels in London and their family members in Gujarat. And it was then that he also came across a Patel Cricket Club in London. "The economic development

that Gujarat has witnessed since decades, religion, culture, politics and policies have made Gujarat a fascinating place. Issues like riots and polarization are not good but it is a fascinating state to study," says the teacher, who understands Gujarati better than Hindi after he learnt the language along with a Jesuit group in Ahmedabad in 1985.

Out of the 13 universities in Netherlands, University of Amsterdam and University of Leiden are focused on Asian studies and course on India is fast becoming a hit among students here.

"When we were offering courses on South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia and Central Asia, the number of students hardly crossed 25. In 2005, we started a China course that saw 200 students enrolled in it. In 2006, we started India course that had 140 students. Now, the student ratio in both China and India course is almost same," says Rutte.

Rutten also gives lectures during annual Indian film festivals in Amsterdam. His observation says that while films like 'Purab Aur Paschim' depicted Indian diaspora in bad light, films like 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' and 'Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge' started depicting NRIs more than Indians.

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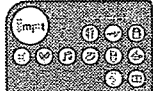
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